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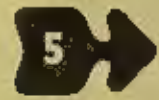
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☐ Art Director

☐ Graphic Design Student

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☐ Photographer

☐ Educator

☐ Web designer

☐ Multimedia designer

☐ Other:

**Which operating system do you use?:**

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☐ Mac System 7

☐ Mac System 7.5 or higher

☐ Windows 3.1

☐ Windows 95

☐ Windows NT

☐ Other:

**Your company's activities. Check 1:**

☐ Design

☐ Advertising

☐ Service Bureau

☐ Printing/PrePress

☐ Interactive CD Rom design

☐ Web design

☐ Educational

☐ Other:

**Which programs do you use most?:**

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☐ PageMaker

☐ Illustrator

☐ FreeHand

☐ Macromedia Director

☐ Fontographer

☐ Photoshop

☐ SiteMill

☐ Fusion

☐ Other:

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**If so what speed?:**

- ☐ Not connected
- ☐ 2400 - 14400 baud
- ☐ 28800 - 33600 baud
- ☐ 56K or higher

**Which design magazines do you read regularly?:**

- ☐ Eye
- ☐ Print
- ☐ How
- ☐ U&Ic
- ☐ I.D.
- ☐ Step by Step
- ☐ Graphis
- ☐ Publish
- ☐ Adobe
- ☐ AIGA Journal
- ☐ Critique
- ☐ CA
- ☐ Other:

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- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Ph.D
- ☐ Other:

**What category of fonts do you use most? Choose one from each pair:**

- ☐ Display
- ☐ Text
- ☐ Classical
- ☐ Contemporary

☐ Don't use fonts

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- ☐ AIGA
- ☐ ACD
- ☐ ATYPI
- ☐ Other:

**Your gender:**

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

**Your age:**

- ☐ 18 and under
- ☐ 19-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70 and over


## ***Emigre* Magazine Foreign Subscriptions:**

**New 4-issue subscription rates: Canada: \$18 - Elsewhere: \$29**



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## INTRODUCTION

When visiting bookstores these days, I am happily surprised and encouraged by the steadily growing graphic design book sections. At Cody's bookstore in Berkeley California, for instance, what used to be a shelf and a half of design books mixed up with many calligraphy books and other books that didn't really belong together, has now expanded into an entire seven shelf bookcase containing primarily books on graphic design, typography and design criticism. I always feel proud when standing in front of it. This is my profession, and if the growing number of books is any indication, it's achieving respectability.

In addition, graphic design is slowly gaining momentum as cultural production worthy of museum exhibitions. Ellen Lupton's *Mixing Messages* show at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, and the continuing series of graphic design exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, are both indications of an increasing awareness of graphic design's value within society.

With this issue of *Emigre* we zoom in on the design book publishing phenomenon by reviewing four recently published books; **G1:** *New Dimensions in Graphic Design*, a compilation of recent graphic design work, *Pure Fuel*, authored by a graphic design studio, *Ray Gun: Out of Control*, a celebration of the magazines published by Marvin Scott Jarrett, and *Mind Grenades: Manifestos from the Future*, reprints of the opening spreads from *Wired* magazine.

Some may argue that these books are not necessarily about graphic design. *Ray Gun: Out of Control*, for instance, is really about the publishing of pop culture magazines, while *Mind Grenades* focuses on the so called "Intro Quotes" taken from back issues of *Wired* magazine. What makes these books so crucial, however, is the importance afforded to the design; instead of its usual servile role, graphic design provides much of the actual content. As such, these books are prime examples of the changing role of graphic design within publishing.

It should come as no surprise, then, that these reviews do not, as is usually the case, linger on the finer points of typefaces, letter spacing, layouts, modern vs. postmodern, ugly vs. beautiful, etc., but instead focus on what is communicated. These books begged us to look at graphic design as content, and we gladly complied. **RVDL**

The Introduction is set in Base 9 Bold and Bold Italic 7/12 point

The Readers Respond section is set in Base 9 Bold and Bold Italic 6.5/12 point.

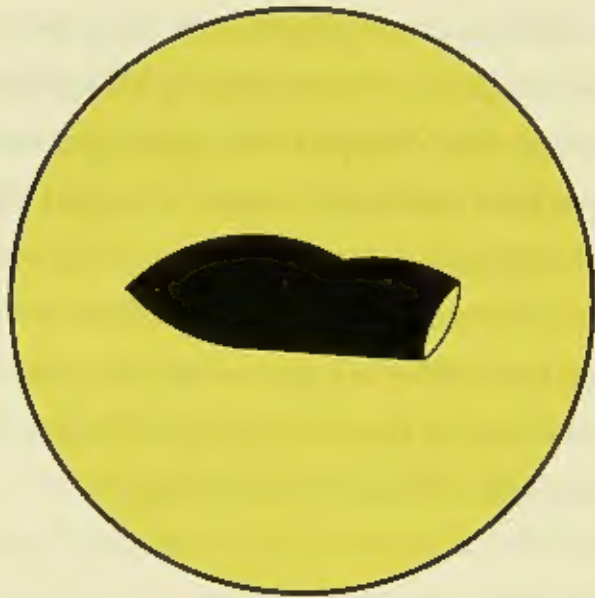
The main articles are set in Base 9 Bold and Bold Italic 7/12 point. Book info is set in Base 9 Bold 6/8 point. Headlines are set in Base 9 Bold 36 point. Folios are set in Base 9 Bold 14 point. By lines are set in Base 9 Bold and Bold Italic 9 and 12 points.



# THE READERS RESPOND

The Emigre reader profile (for psychoanalytical use only.) Perhaps due to the absence of a "comments" space on the Emigre no.42 subscription reply form, several readers decided to express themselves by embellishing the FellaParts illustration printed on the reverse side. We submit this selection of illustrations as proof of the human mind's interpretive powers.

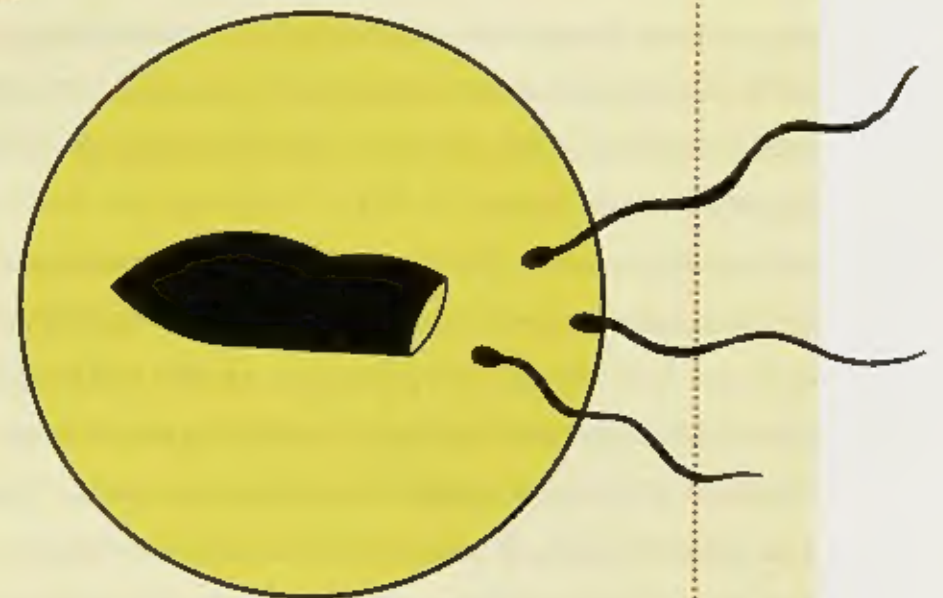
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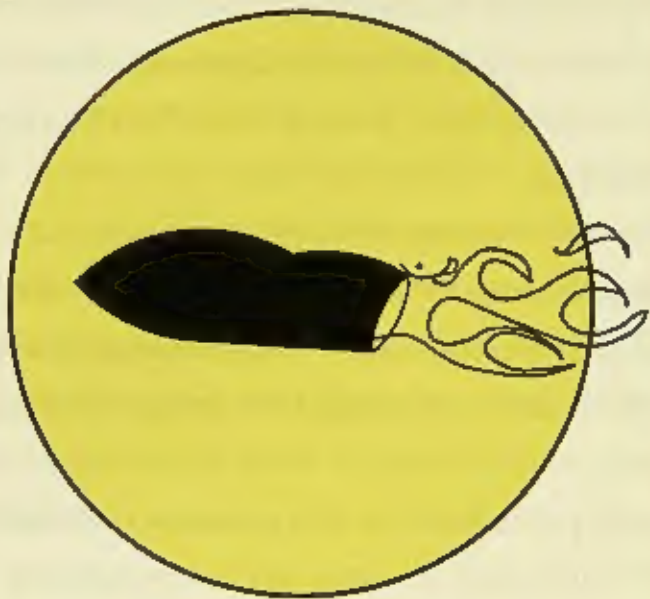
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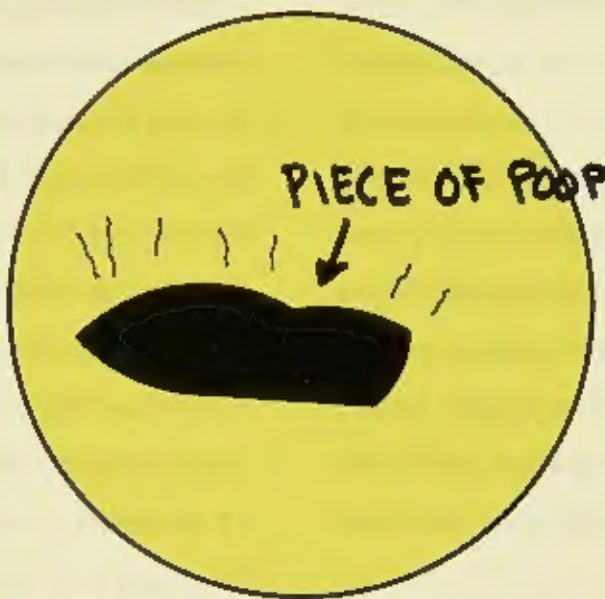
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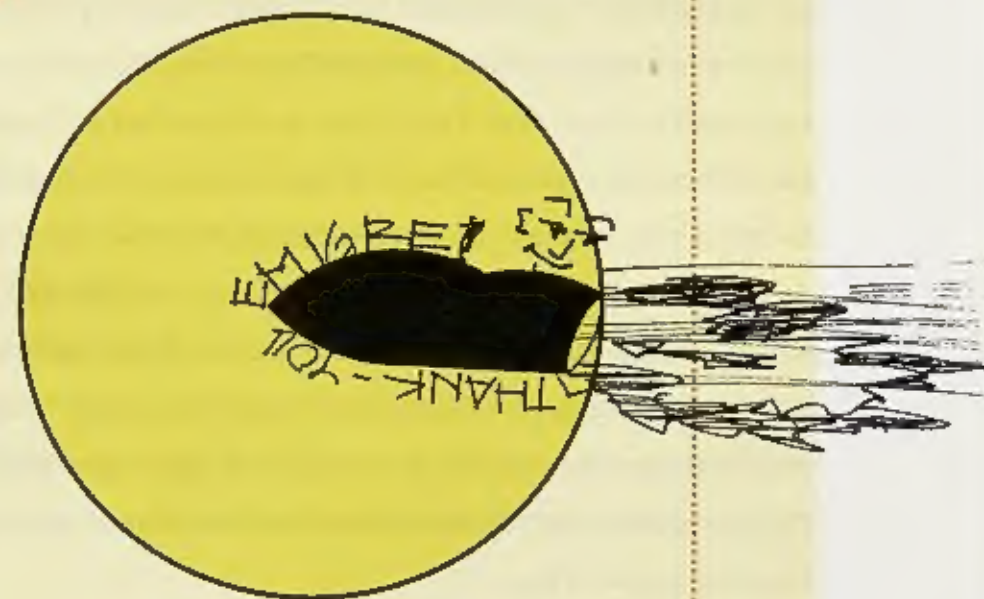
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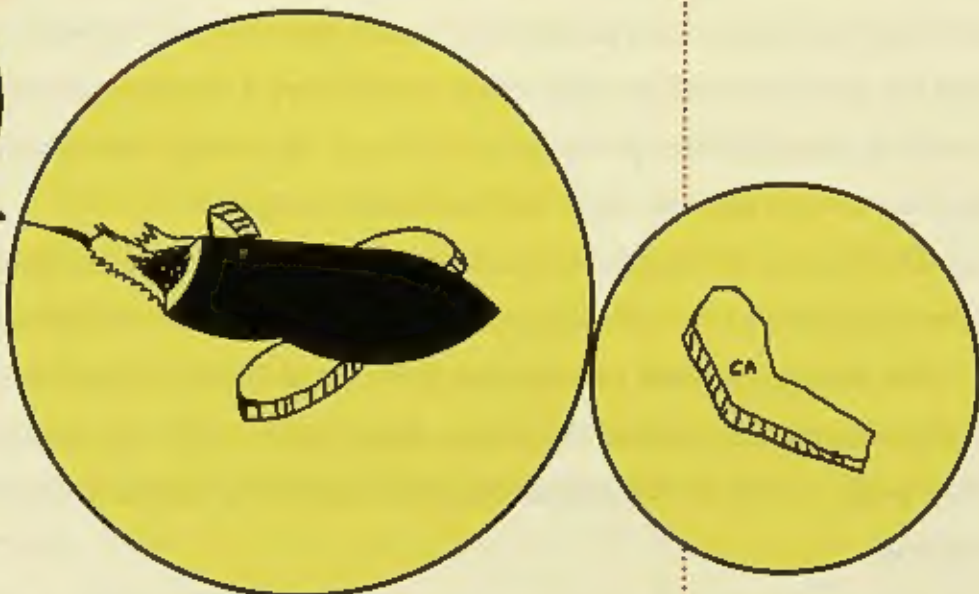
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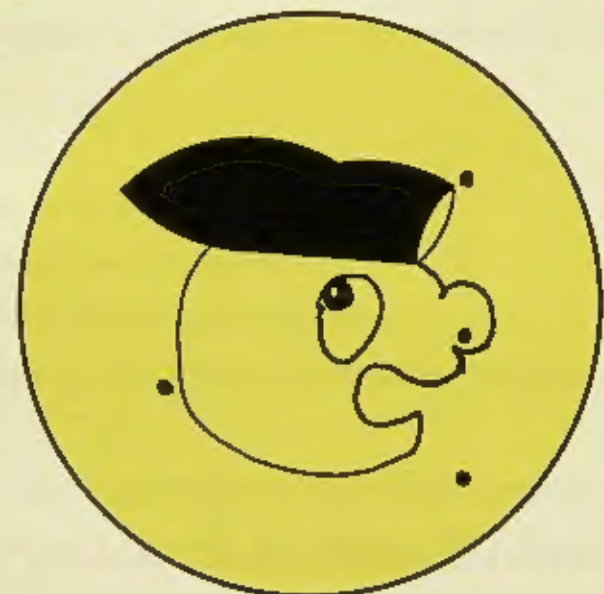
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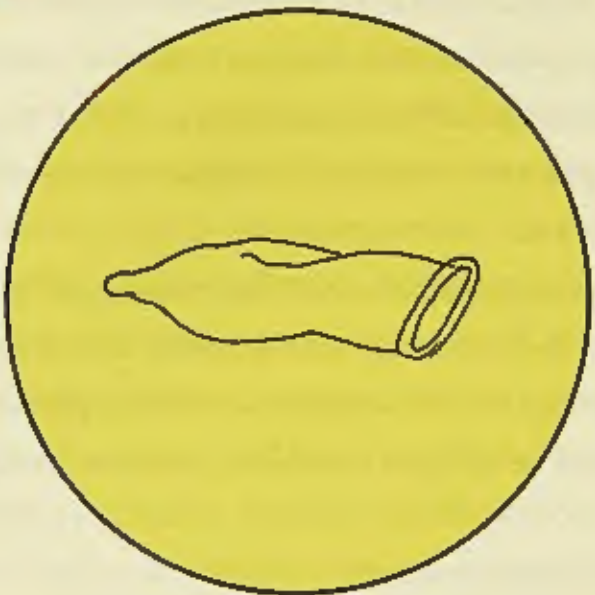
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9.



10.



11.



1. The original FellaPart illustration by Edward Fella  
2. Dan Ibarra 3. Unknown 4. Jeff Mullican 5. Rodent E.K.  
6. Eric Einwiller 7. Max Normand 9. Marty Ackley  
10. Will Farrington 11. Edward Fella

New  
Rudi  
Swann  
the new magazine Good luck w/ it!  
H



Dear *Emigre*,

I just received issue 43 last night, and was surprised at the prevailing angst that designers regularly feel about being forced into compromises with clients, unable to express themselves freely, and as a result dissatisfied with their lot. I offer the following advice to those who suffer such angst: change jobs.

In its very name, "commercial art" prioritizes commerce over aesthetics, economics over "free expression," and if you ask me, this is not bad or to be lamented, it's just part of the business. The designer's ultimate goal should not be the willy-nilly expression of his or her individual aesthetics. If that's what designers are after, they should quit designing and start shopping their work to art galleries.

The designer's goal should be to help shape, and then maximize his or her expression within a symbolic framework that generates the highest possible returns for the client. The client's needs and the prevailing values of the client's audience (as determined by the client's market research and other reasonable, generally client-driven, means) should not be considered factors that force the designer into "compromises." Instead they should be considered conditions under which designing must take place, in much the same way that printing and photographic processes may force designers into "compromises." These are, in the end, simply the realities of the business, realities that some folks will whine about as they turn out bad designs, complaining that they can't design the way they want to because the world is conspired against them, while others will turn these same constraints to their advantage, turn out great designs, and live happily ever after.

It's up to each of us to choose how we want to approach the realities of our business. Personally, I'd recommend the path toward "happily ever after."

Sean Walter, Internet

## 4

We are proud to announce that *Emigre* is the recipient of both the 1997 AIGA Gold Medal Award and the 1998 Charles Nypels Award.

Dear *Emigre*,

You know, I have been receiving your little "catalog" for a few years, starting when it was just a large piece of paper folded up to mail, and I have to say that it is the worst piece of advertising I have ever seen. Each time I receive it I think to myself, "Maybe I'm missing something here." I look at it some more and just shake my head. I'm just not sure what your point is. Something that is not easy to read can't be very effective, yet it must somehow be since you've been doing it for so long.

So, my request is that you just take my name out of your data bank so that you waste one less catalog on me because I will never buy anything from you since I can't even get through the catalog.

Thanks so much,

Elisabeth Donati

Dear *Emigre*,

I am a third year graphic design student at Wanganui Polytechnic in New Zealand. I have been a keen follower of *Emigre* ever since our American tutors introduced it to me in my first year. I can't find enough back issues to quench my thirst, though.

Recently, however, I was fortunate to receive issue no. 43, and although you are probably getting as much flak as you did for the "No Small Issue," I thought I needed to rant on the topic. Yes, Designers are People Too, and now they are likely to have an edition of *Emigre* sitting next to last week's copy of *TV Guide*.

It appears, even though you admit to the problems of selling out, that the move is paying off (although a comment was made by a compatriot of mine, that you now look like a rave magazine rather than a design journal). I feel that when any publication has the gumption to ask for advertisers, it is admitting success both on an influential and commercial level. The fact that you receive mail from such obscure locations such as my own could be seen to reflect this fact. However, I wonder, now that you are becoming mainstream, can you still get up every morning, look at that designer in the mirror, and call yourself *Emigre*?

I see the future of *Emigre* as problematic. How do you become mainstream while respecting the intelligence of your customer/client base? For example, the designers and typophiles who read your magazine can recognize a unique typeface when they see one. Is it really necessary to caption every page with a typeface description? This could be seen as condescending.

Base Monospace could also be seen as an indicator of the dulling of one of the brightest edges in design as the result of going mainstream. Zuzana Licko is one of the last great quality type designers out there, and is cause of considerable hope for design students who have to deal with countless type offerings consisting of Times New Roman minus a few serifs. Unfortunately, with the release of Base Monospace, even though you called it new, it could be argued that you have simply reinvented the wheel in the guise of Base 9 and 12.

This letter is a plea. Don't undermine what has made you great by walking the corridors of mass consumerism and popular culture. I am in love with *Emigre*'s evolution, but don't destroy what has placed you in that position. Please do more of what you do most: present new ideas.

Thanks,

Tristram Sparks, Wanganui, New Zealand



## THE READERS RESPOND

Dear *Emigre*,

I recently received a subscription to your magazine. At first, I must be honest, I thought, how am I going to read this. You see, I am over 40 and I give my eyes assistance to read – the over 40 syndrome. Anyway, I began turning each page, sometimes confused and sometimes excited to find a “normal” page layout. I have just finished reading the articles and you have now found a lover of your magazine. I was so impressed with the quality of writing, the important issues tackled, the interactive way the design is accomplished, that I wanted to share this with my students. At present, I am teaching History of Graphic Design and am using Philip Meggs’s book. My students were very afraid of this book at first because it is so “meaty,” but now they realize its value as a source/reference.

Anyway, my reason for writing to you, other than saying thank you for publishing a magazine of this caliber, is to ask a favor. Oh no, here it comes. Oh yes. I teach in a small community college in Greenville, North Carolina. I took *Emigre* to class today to expose the students to what is happening on the West Coast. Though the South has many good designers and schools, our department is very small and we are working very hard to expose the students to every possibility that exists and thus I ask, is there any way to receive some free issues of *Emigre* so that I can share them with all the students in our graphic design/communication program? I realize that this is asking for a lot, but I know they will be absorbed. I appreciate your time and consideration. And, I thank you once again for a magazine that opens the mind to possibilities/thoughts/ideas that may have been missed.

Thanking you in advance,

Ann Lipscomb, Washington, NC

Dear *Emigre*,

I am a design student and a new subscriber to *Emigre*. I was shocked to find a lack of hung punctuation in your magazine. In number 42, on page 5, the open quote on the word “read” is not hung. This, to me, creates a strange kind of indent and ruins the flush left. On the same page, in the second paragraph, “first” shows the same problem. I’ve seen similar instances with justified text and unhung punctuation on the right alignment. I would like to know Mr. Keedy’s opinion as well as your own. This is not a hate letter nor one written in anger, like many I’ve seen in the letters to the editor section. And, sorry, no complaint about the loss of the large format.

Patrick Johnson, Internet

Dear *Emigre*,

Designers have telephones Too.

A graphic design student is always happy when he sees his work published in one of his favorite magazines. So were we when we opened *Emigre* no.43 and saw a reproduction of a page from our latest issue, *Mutabor* 7. But the happiness quickly disappeared as we (tried to) read the article. What was this? The author, Denise Gonzales Crisp, tried to comment and explain our work without ever having made any inquiries, which led to nothing but speculation on her side. This is rather sad, because some of her comments are quite far from reality. One phone call would have cleared up all the haziness. Nobody contacted us.

By writing this letter we hope to clarify some things for those who might

have read the article. *Mutabor* does not have a big budget, and neither does the Academy where we studied. We do all the work; from organizing and writing, all the way to preparing the printing plates – we even do most of the binding, much of it by hand. The people who help us work for free, and the money paid by the sponsors is just enough to cover the cost of printing. The Academy does not give us “acres of money.” We built up *Mutabor* by ourselves without any guidance from the teachers. We started it, because we needed a platform to express our thoughts regarding visual communication.

Contrary to the cynical speculations of the author about our future “junior designer or art director jobs” where everything “will humm with promise,” we know what we’re doing and what our work is about. That is why we publish *Mutabor* – it is a tool that allows us to do work that is free of the client and financial restraints that ordinary design jobs have.

We have worked for outside clients for some years now, even when we were still in school, and we have always tried, and often succeeded, to bring the spirit of *Mutabor* into our commercial work. Which is why we get these job in the first place.

This is what *Mutabor* is about: stop working for a moment, take a deep breath, and consider your options. *Mutabor* is not about money – it is about exploring graphic design, it is about process not profit.

We were particularly surprised to find this kind of writing in *Emigre*, because this is not the kind of approach we expected from you. However, thank you Mr. Keedy for the amazing article in no.43. Keep on publishing such great stuff. If anybody needs real information about *Mutabor*, just call 49.431.556176.

Heinrich Paravicini, the *Mutabor* team, Germany

Dear *Emigre*,

Here is the standard procedure I follow upon receipt of an issue of your magazine:

- 1.) Admire cover.
- 2.) Scan for interesting graphic content.
- 3.) Read an article. a.) Begin to get upset.
- 4.) Read another article. a.) Finish getting upset.
- 5.) Read the letters section. a.) Feel empowered by my brethren’s occasional frustration.
- 6.) Begin writing a letter berating you for focusing too much on esoteric, intellectualist subject matter (except, of course, the House Industries thing, which I suspect was a favor or dare of some kind) which has no functional value to me in my daily professional life.
- 7.) Throw away said letter having realized through analysis of my own arguments that esoteric intellectualism is just what *Emigre* is there for (and why I keep renewing my subscription) and that if I really wanted pretty pictures I’d be giving my money to *CA* or *Print* (which I do).
- 8.) Begin drinking and dreaming of a day when I will command the fees which will free my time to become an esoteric intellectual (unless you all do all this brilliant, well-considered work on Starbucks wages in your spare time, slaving away for a pittance, meager acknowledgement your only reward, in which case I hate you all even more).

Isn’t it sad that the only letter that actually made it to you is completely devoid of any constructive or analytical content?

Thank you for being a continuing source of frustration and inspiration and



for destroying my self image thereby driving me to one day destroy you all.

Best wishes,

Eric Singley, Internet

Dear Emigre,

Now that I have filled out my form for the free subscription, I feel ready to let you know what I think of the changes you have made.

When I first began subscribing to *Emigre*, it was clear that the magazine was meant to be different from the usual design magazines on my local bookseller's rack. It succeeded: it was unique in size, design, fonts and editorial content.

I was sorry to see the magazine reduced in size, but I certainly understood the economic benefits in creating and mailing a smaller piece. Still, the magazine was uniquely designed, it still had its unique typographic style, and the content remained as weighty as ever.

Now that the magazine has begun to accept advertising, I fear that two more of *Emigre's* unique features will disappear. It is hard to do a really coherent design when you must leave holes for ads. And advertising will have a pernicious effect on editorial content; even the brave writers at *Emigre* may fear to offend their sponsors. I fear that your magazine will become a less glossy version of such content-free publications as *Print* and *Communication Arts* magazines.

All that I am certain will remain is the unique *Emigre* typography. For me, that alone is enough to request a continued subscription (plus the fact that I already paid for most of it before you made this change). But it would be sad to see your once trend-setting magazine reduced to a showcase of fonts, a hip version of *U&Ic*.

I hope my fears are groundless, and that you will create something as new and as different as the old *Emigre*. I wish you success, but doubt that you will succeed. If there is anything I can do to help, I would be honored.

Sincerely,

Cliff Questel, Internet

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Vent, respond, comment or criticize:

Snail Mail: 4475 D Street, Sacramento, CA 95819, USA

Fax: 916.451.4351

Email: [editor@emigre.com](mailto:editor@emigre.com)

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Direct all questions regarding subscriptions, back issues, submission guidelines, font sales, technical support and distribution to: [sales@emigre.com](mailto:sales@emigre.com)

Dear Emigre,

When history is told, a story is told. We all know this. Mr. Keedy's erratic, angst-filled account which he titles "Greasing the Wheels of Capitalism with Style and Taste Or The 'Professionalization' of American Graphic Design" comes to me as a narrative of loss and, on Mr. Keedy's part, unabashed nostalgia. Is Mr. Keedy a closet romantic? Or a lapsed Catholic perhaps? I ask this because what Mr. Keedy has given us is a tale of paradise lost – the infection of "fertile American soil" by, one supposes, something sinister and foreign. It is a story of youthful rebellion and corruption in which the unschooled, democratic, individual, hard-workin' eclectics are usurped by the money-grubbing, crowd-pleasing, let-me-kiss-your-butt modernists. In contrast to the Edenic, eclectic past, Mr. Keedy's description of contemporary design is, at least from a designer's point of view, not far short of apocalyptic. Design is viewed by corporate America as "a cheap, endlessly, renewable, natural resource" (we all know what's happening to these) and in matters of some importance such as "success" and "contribution" Mr. Keedy tells us "designers are screwed." Obviously, there is something fatal and catastrophic here.

At the end of a narrative that comes to me as way too tidy, Mr. Keedy puts forth his idea of a "proactive design culture that determines its own values in its own best interest." This transvaluation of designer values supposedly has its locus in the "individual creator, not the user." My question to Mr. Keedy is: who is this individual? Where does she stand relative to a consumer society that mass produces culture and that she produces/is produced by? Does she or can she stand outside of it? I ask this question because I find it difficult to see how any designer can distance themselves far enough from the "economic realities" of a consumer society to find an ethically transcendent point from which to fashion independent values. In other words, I fail to see how the "creative individual" can assert an independence, an ethical point of opposition when the economic order of the day extends its presence and influence to even the most intimate of life's moments. The design historian Tony Fry writes that in the context of a consumer society the designer "has to be interrogated not as creative subject but as deployed laborer, as expression of the corporation and commodity." If this be the case, then any talk of "excellence without compromise" becomes itself a corporate slogan. Mr Keedy's penultimate paragraph could have been written for Shell Oil, or the American military, or for Tony Blair addressing the British Labour Party. Replace "Is it wrong for designers..." with "Is it wrong for Shell executives..." and I think you'll get my point.

Mr. Keedy's thorough discontent with the reductive, authoritarian logic of our modernist forebears, as well as with the "culture industry" of the 90s is legitimate and, from a designer with such a high profile, welcome. Yet, to caricature the past into a good guys vs. bad guys scenario and then to suggest a way forward whilst paying scant attention to the very thing he claims to be writing about (i.e. capitalism) is, to say the least, very disappointing.

Yours sincerely,

Eddie West, Internet



# Directions

In keeping with the recent trend of rock star endorsements of graphic designers:  
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 Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top



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64  
pages

64  
pages

**SOLUTIONS**

32  
pages

**CONVICTIONS**





Mind Grenades: Manifestos from the Future  
HardWired, \$32.95, 160 pages, 1997  
ISBN 1-888869-00-3

Design and editorial direction by John Plunkett and Louis Rossetto

# HYPE OR HOPE

REVIEW BY DIANE GROMALA





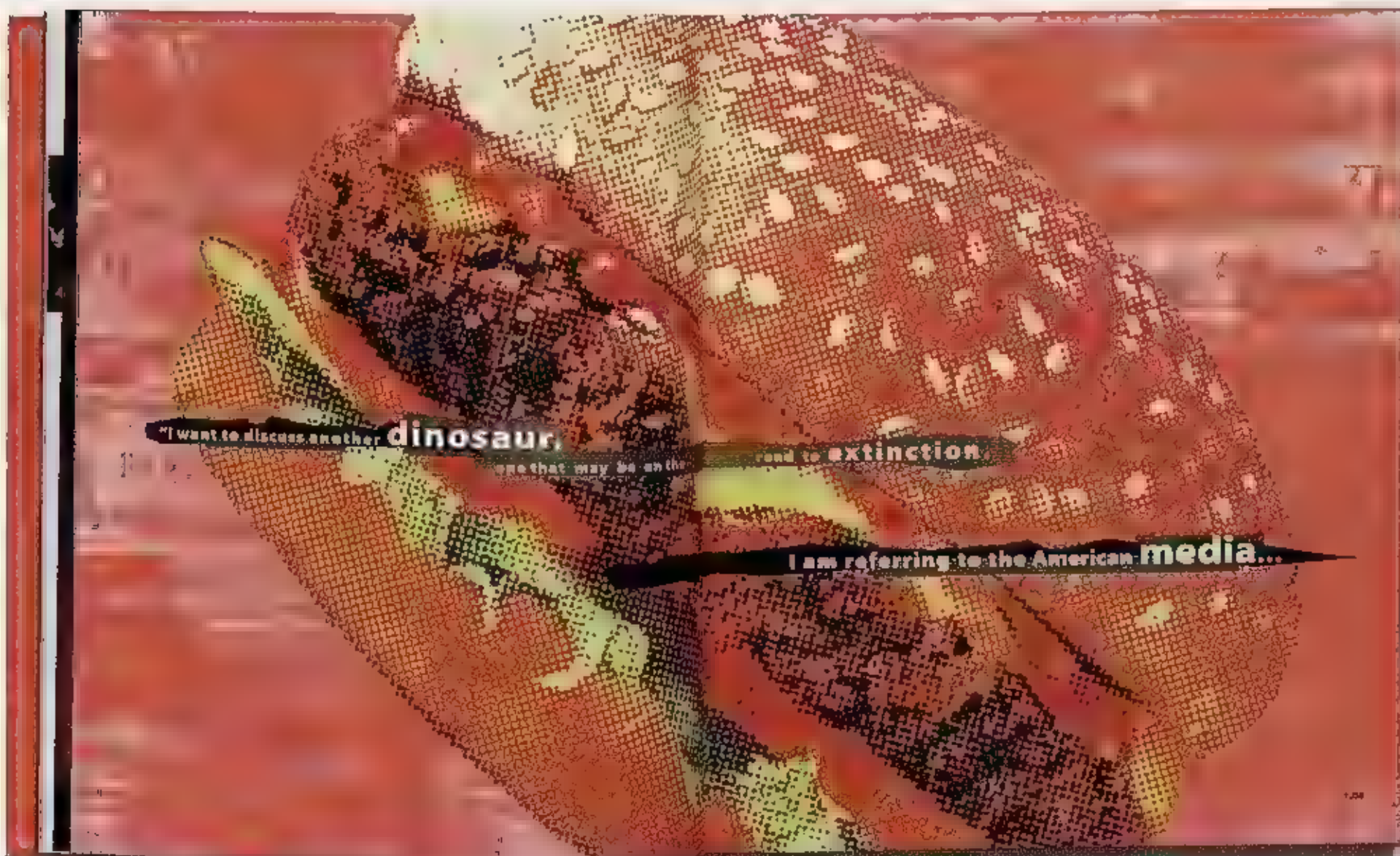
It is usually maddening to accrue design books and journals. They may be necessary to consume in order to keep current with the profession, yet they are often pricey, not terribly profound, and anything but timeless. There are a few exceptions of course, and if you can hold onto them long enough, some serve as useful historical artifacts. *Mind Grenades: Manifestos from the Future*, while perhaps not strictly a "design" book, is nonetheless an interesting one for designers on several fronts. A compilation of introductory pages from *Wired* magazine, this book marks an emerging genre of design, one consumed by an affluent and influential user base on a mass scale. Its nonlinear typography and neo-rococo use of textures and images reflect the phenomena it deals with: the increasing proliferation and sensory assault of electronic media, from television to computers. It includes insider production notes and brief descriptions of the intentions of John Plunkett, the creative director — factors usually not available outside of enlightened design competitions, conferences, or paper samples.

More importantly, though, *Mind Grenades* provides designers with an introduction to ideas and attitudes that surround emerging technology and the ways it is transforming contemporary American life. It is an interesting artifact that embodies a certain rhetorical strategy, an insistent, breathless hype that is endemic to the computer industry. Rather than throwing the baby out with bathwater, though, it is a better idea to familiarize oneself with the concerns of a powerful and highly relevant industry, and to consider these ideas, as David Byrne says on the back cover, with a lot of salt. Rather than simply dismissing the hype, it is more productive and intriguing to understand how the hype functions, and how important anxieties, observations, celebrations, and warnings are caught and thrive in its sticky web. In 20 years, *Mind Grenades* will no doubt look dated,

but time will tell if the manifestos of the future displayed any prescience. Above all, the value of *Mind Grenades* lies in its ability to cross-infect the concerns and interests of designers with those of the digerati. A fabulous commodity fetish, indeed.

A "mind grenade" is the term Louis Rossetto, editor and publisher of *Wired*, uses to refer to the provocative quotes that he chooses from the articles within each issue. These quotes, or "manifestos from the future," are given visual prominence by Plunkett, and introduce each issue in lieu of an editorial page. It is a significant move for Rossetto, who eschews traditional editorial pages, preferring instead to allow the work (text and images) to speak, or shout, for itself. As any reader of *Wired* knows, its visual presence is just as important as its words, a growing phenomenon in magazine publishing, where editors usually dominate. The vision for *Wired*, as prescribed by Rossetto, is that it should look like it fell from the sky from another planet, feel as exciting as our times, and focus on extraordinary people doing remarkable work, rather than on technology. The creators of *Wired* want readers to instinctively sense that it is "smart and cool," cool enough to invest energy in to figure out. In case this escapes you, testimonials to how cool *Mind Grenades* is by mature arbiters of good taste (Nicolas Negroponte, Jenny Holzer, David Byrne, and Laurie Anderson) emblazon the back cover. No matter that Negroponte is a contributing editor, or that all of these folks have been included in some form or another, in the magazine. The self-referential is a sign of our times.

The neon colors that cradle *Mind Grenades* vaguely recall the ghosts of 1960s psychedelia, ghosts that haunt the computer industry's communal memory and strain of utopian yearnings. And its nifty die-cut typography is reminiscent of *Anarchist Cookbook*. Of course,





these are stylistic nods to the regime of people involved in the computer industry, leaders who came of age in the 60s and 70s, counter-cultural only insofar in their insistence that "information wants to be free." Unlike that counter-culture of the 60s, or perhaps reflecting what happened to these people thereafter, a corporate orientation and the smell of profit and opportunity is pervasive and heady.

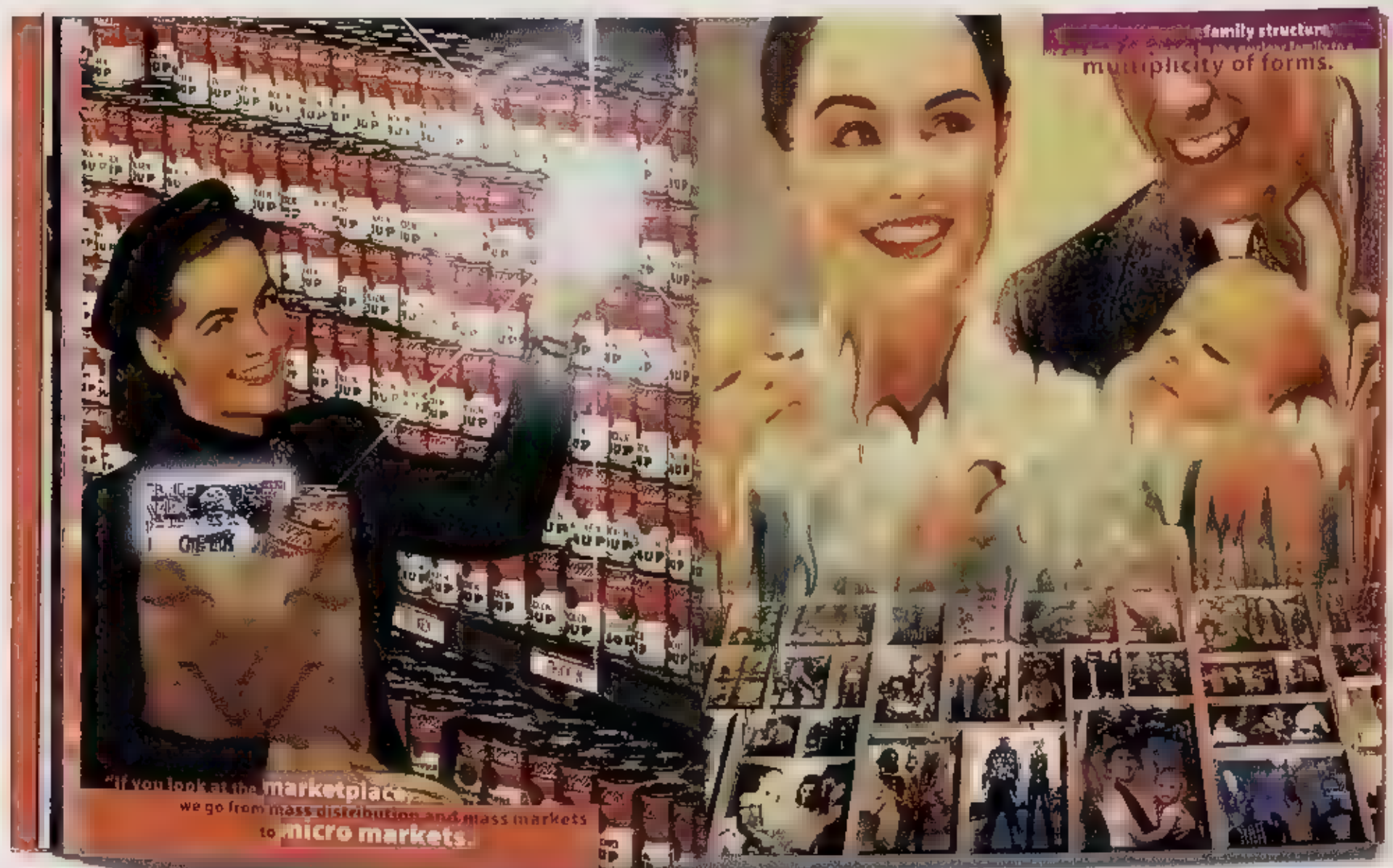
Inside *Mind Grenades*, words are few. Pithy quotes are intended to jolt as much as the graphics do. Here, in homage to Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore's *The Medium is the Massage*, words and images are crafted to create an experiential synthesis. As the titles suggest, these quotes and designs are meant to be Molotov cocktails for your brain, declarations from a virtual who's who list of luminaries both living and dead: Marc Andreessen, John Perry Barlow, Michael Crichton, James Der Derian, Julian Dibbell, Brian Eno, Thomas Jefferson, Mitch Kapor, Brenda Laurel, patron saint Marshall McLuhan, Hans Moravec, Nicholas Negroponte, Ed Regis, and Alvin Toffler, among others. Their ideas range from the profound to the highly suspect to an eyeball-rolling, if entertaining, absurdity. These provocateurs tell us that technology is changing everything—from government, politics, economics and warfare, to biology, mortality, human relations, evolution, and expression. The ground they cover, too, ranges from the global to local and personal, from reality to dreams, reconfigured or dizzyingly pureed by the inescapable effects of technology.

Some authors speak in the bright hues of a gleeful utopianism, in tones curiously similar to those in *Vogue* or *Elle*, but devoid of irony. Surely, a lost opportunity. Other authors reach into the dark abyss of dystopian futures, or simply strive to provoke. Fortunately, Plunkett's art direction goes far to take the edge off preachiness and hype, in

effect, reorienting it. He distributes these quotes over several pages, often and smartly employing textures and images with more nose-thumbing humor and irony than the author's proclamations. The images range from documentary photographs to metallic and acid-colored textures, paper cut outs and an illustration of roosters and men gardening, one of whom breast feeds an infant robot. Eggs, sperm and hamburgers abound; as do nuclear bombs, body parts (brains, hands and screaming faces are favorites), and money. Strands of DNA, bar codes, pills, chickens, televisions, and copyright symbols are layered and entangled in textures. Or, in contrast, some spreads focus on a singular image, pristine in a bold use of negative space. To his credit, Rossetto shares co-author billing with Plunkett. To extend the McLuhan inspiration, though, the other designers and illustrators could become as visible as the authors, though they are listed in the back pages.

No matter how radically the authors claim is that traditional media will die, this book reflects the more observable phenomenon that one medium does not completely or immediately annihilate its preceding forms. Books did not die with film, television didn't completely commit radio genocide, and multimedia doesn't necessarily mean everything will exist on screen. More likely, as history demonstrates, there will be an interplay of existent with emerging forms, each altering the other. So it is with *Mind Grenades*. It could be a website, but its producers chose the form of a book. But this book reflects the remote-control-happy flipping of television, just as the text layered over many pages reflects back from a multi-mediated, hypertextual screen. And the short quotes are akin to sound bites. They can explode in your mind for the sheer, gratuitous thrill of it, or leave you itching for more, leading you to back issues of the magazine, web searches, or perhaps even books.

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Reading *Wired*, and thus *Mind Grenades*, is like watching TV. Whether you smartly deconstruct it, feed a stunning physical addiction to the frequency of flashing narratives, pictures and sound, or tune into a sort of trashy communal ritual, there is pleasure to be had. And frankly, who wouldn't like to engage in the fantasy channels promised by *Mind Grenades*? On the dominant channel, you can enjoy limitless empowerment. You can live in a world more egalitarian than elitist, more decentralized than hierarchical. You can "finally do it all" and "be whatever you want to be." Here, technology will serve individuals and communities, not mass audiences, and we will have the upper hand over advertisers. You can forget Social Security and IRAs, because there will be more wealth, so much wealth that you can retire at birth.

If you'd prefer a darker, more apocalyptic channel, you can tune to one that promises niche warfare, cultural warfare, economic and corporate warfare, simulation warfare, anarchy and the collapse of traditional institutions. These don't really die but become battle-grounds of impotence and irrelevance, from government to literature (empiricism wins). Cultural viruses rip through the world (in this case resulting in an almost frightening Disney-like cheerfulness), ethical value systems fight one another, and we lose the universal to the balkanized. There are very few channels akin to the peculiar niche offerings one might find on cable TV. No *Trainspotting* sensibilities or food porn channels or big haired, brightly festooned fundamentalists. Not yet, not here. This is, after all, a mainstream enterprise. However, the observation that women are stylistically more like entrepreneurs and men more like gigolo venture capitalists, illustrated by chickens and roosters and baby robots, leaves one hopeful for spinoffs.

The channel most like PBS, not surprisingly, depicts problems with the status quo of technology, revealed by artists. According to Brian Eno, "The problem with computers is that there is not enough Africa in them," and "What is pissing me off is that they use so little of my body." This channel has far to go, though. No one quite gets around to asking if technology will lead to larger rifts between the haves and have nots, or if all of those pictures depicting exotic others aren't horrifying stereotypes that simply recolonize those recalcitrant denizens from the "Third World" once and for all. No one asks if not everyone will "want" access, and there aren't any visible, born again Luddites. It doesn't much matter, since *Mind Grenades* basks in the insistent glow that the global and personal will be dominated by technology. Its effects, it is assumed, are inevitable, compulsory and inescapable.

Go ahead, ask. Just who is speaking for everybody, anyway? The authors of these mind grenades, who talk about "everyone" and "everything," are predominantly privileged white males. They do not reflect the diversity of whom they speak, particularly in regard to gender. So much for a brave new world. To do a *Billy Bob* count, or to use the ever-present sports metaphor of keeping score, 31 quotes are from men, 1 from a woman. Most images are of men (3 to 1), and those depicting women are mostly stereotypical. No Tank Girls here, Madonna notwithstanding. The gender ratio of the producers of *Mind Grenades* is even more woeful. Certainly, you could argue, this reflects the demographics of *Wired*, 81% of whom are male, at an average age of 39. These are mid-to upper managerial guys who average annual incomes of \$83,000. Of course, one can argue that these numbers simply reflect larger cultural phenomena. And that the authors and producers, while dripping with empowerment and eager to share or inflict it, are impotent to change this





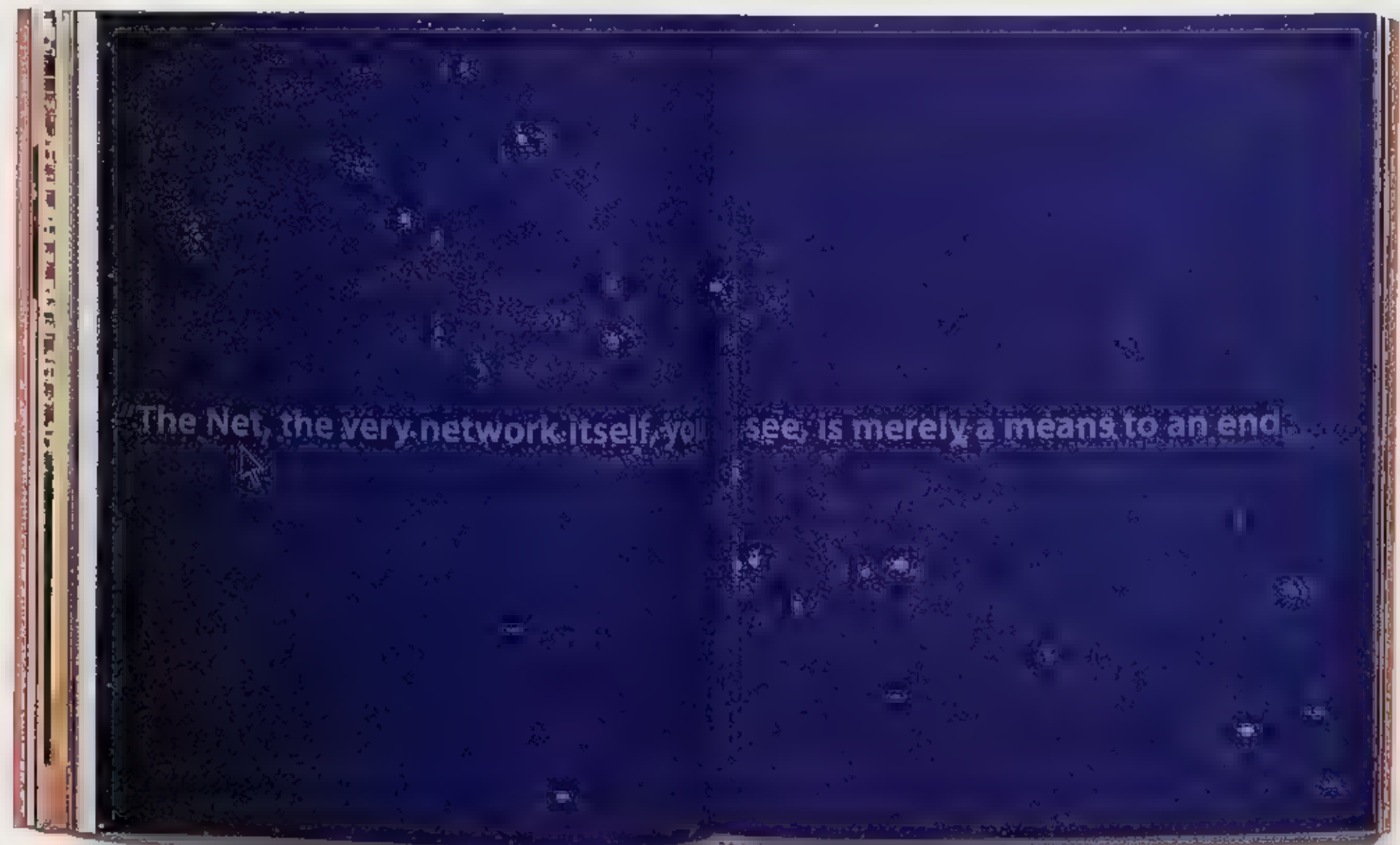
particular state of affairs. Or maybe they're simply disinterested. So *Wired*, from which *Mind Grenades* originates, panders to its readership, a bit of a postmodern *Popular Mechanics* for the affluent, a pasteurized carton of the edgy, safe as milk. This speaks to one of the issues always confronting designers or any cultural producers: do you create to reflect the world as it is, see or reveal hidden aspects of it through different lenses, or do you try to change it? Are you makin' pretty pictures for the Man, or striving for social, economic, and cultural change? Do you cater to your user's fantasies and interests, or try to expand market share? Are they mutually exclusive? One has to wonder why these enthusiastic, opportunity-hungry folks deliberately choose not to increase their market, though the answer may not be surprising.

It's not like there is a dearth of females with incendiary attitudes ripe for the munitions mill: there's Australia's VNS Matrix, England's Sadie Plant, or our own Web Grrrls, to name a few. Others talk about guerrilla intimacy, exult war as menstrual envy, and technology as reproductive envy, a kind of bachelor machine. They gayly insist on the wet, the messy, the bodily, and find pleasure in rubbing gender distinctions slippery and raw. Mind grenades that don't simply reify the militaristic thinking that underlies technology but radically upsets the notions we mistake for "nature" and "common sense" may be the most virulent of all. A few of these voices are sporadically heard, in small measure, in *Wired*, but none (save Brenda Laurel's) are included in *Mind Grenades*. There are many other voices and interests to be heard, however, by the "everybody" else. A reluctance to include them is a symptom less of a conspiracy theory than of ideology, or of the way power works. If the changes wrought by technology are to be as radical, pervasive, and destabilizing as the authors claim, then those who have power and privilege now risk

losing, or sharing, it with others. In the face of this threat, the best way to bunker down and to preserve privilege is to retain control of technology and the way we think about it, while at the same time create desire and demand for it. Bolster the positivist scientific paradigm, and chocolate cover it in cultural terms. Fetishize the future.

It is easy to bite the lure of insistent, future-spewing technomessiahs. When your anxieties and dreams are stirred up, predictions and prophets offer temporary relief, fleeting balms and salves and promises of redemption. The more anxiety, desire, and demand you produce, the greater potential need for saviors. And the more these prophets sound self-assured, the more uncertain and vertiginous the cultural and technological change, the stronger the response. Or so it would seem. As Jean Francois Lyotard reminds us, those who control technology maintain ascendancy through relentless change. This need for messiahs exists despite history, which teaches us that most predictions about technology are usually misguided, blatantly wrong, or seem ludicrous in retrospect.

The real hook of *Mind Grenades*, though, is that its provocations cannot be easily ignored or dismissed outright, for they resonate with many of our deepest fears and anxieties, hopes and dreams, and changes we see happening on the level of the everyday. These ideas may be embedded in hype, certainly, but some of them are compelling and thought-provoking sketches and guideposts. A few stick between your teeth, and the design is crucial; just don't look here for evidence to support the authors' claims or sustained arguments. That *Mind Grenades* is a compilation of introductory pages of *Wired*, in the best case, creates a desire to want more, to know more, to figure out what these authors are agitating for, and why. Designers, usually a group reluctant to join in the fray of defining radical tech-





nological change, could gain from a familiarity with these ideas, and from taking notice at how we are implicated in the cultural transmission of these ideas. Curiously, *Mind Grenades* is longer lasting than back issues of the magazine, and its heavy reliance on design is ready-made for our curiosity. One can only hope that *Mind Grenades* spawns our interest, and that that interest takes rhizomatic root.



Pure Fuel

Booth-Clibborn Editions, \$50.00, 208 pages, 1996

ISBN 0-688-15229-5

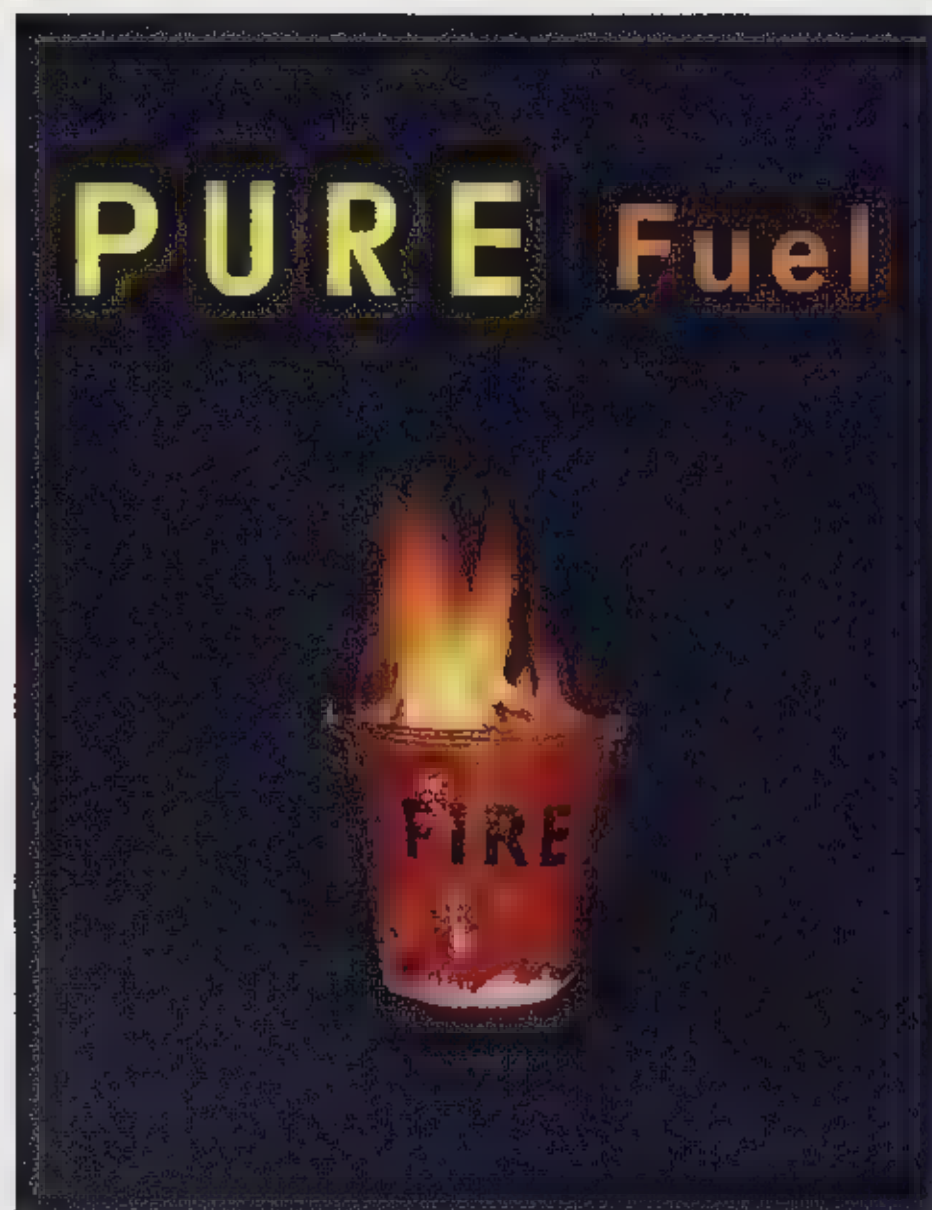
Concept, art direction and design by Fuel (Peter Miles, Damon Murray,  
and Stephen Sorrell).

Text by Richard Preston

# FUEL FULL PULL POLL POOL COOL COOK BOOK

REVIEW BY KENNETH FITZGERALD

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## FLAP

"Peter Miles, Damon Murray, and Stephen Sorrell pursue an exploration of graphic media in this, their first major publication. Formed at the Royal College of Art in 1991, Fuel design group came to prominence through their eponymous independent publications. Despite limited availability, these collectable editions succeeded in questioning convention within a magazine format. As well as publishing their own acclaimed magazine, Fuel have, over the last five years worked on high profile media campaigns for clients including Levi Strauss, MTV and Virgin Records. They are based in Spitalfields, London."

## FACT

The concept, art direction, design of *Pure Fuel* is by Fuel, with text by Richard Preston. Over twenty-five other individuals are listed as contributors. The book has 208 pages in full color, is 10" wide by 12.5" tall by 1" thick and weighs 3.125 lbs. It is published by Booth-Clibborn Editions (London) and costs \$50.

## THEM

It's British Invasion time in graphic authorship. Most noise about the topic has emanated from the States – both theory and supposed practice. The near-simultaneous release this year of two books from design groups working in England seems an almost concerted attack on the authorship charts. Fuel's *Pure Fuel* and Tomato's *Process; A Tomato Project*, invite comparison not only for their near release dates but for their ambitions. Both groups formed in 1991 and have high profiles in progressive British design for their distinctive output and self-promotion. To continue the pop music comparison, the two groups are like the Oasis and Blur of British design.

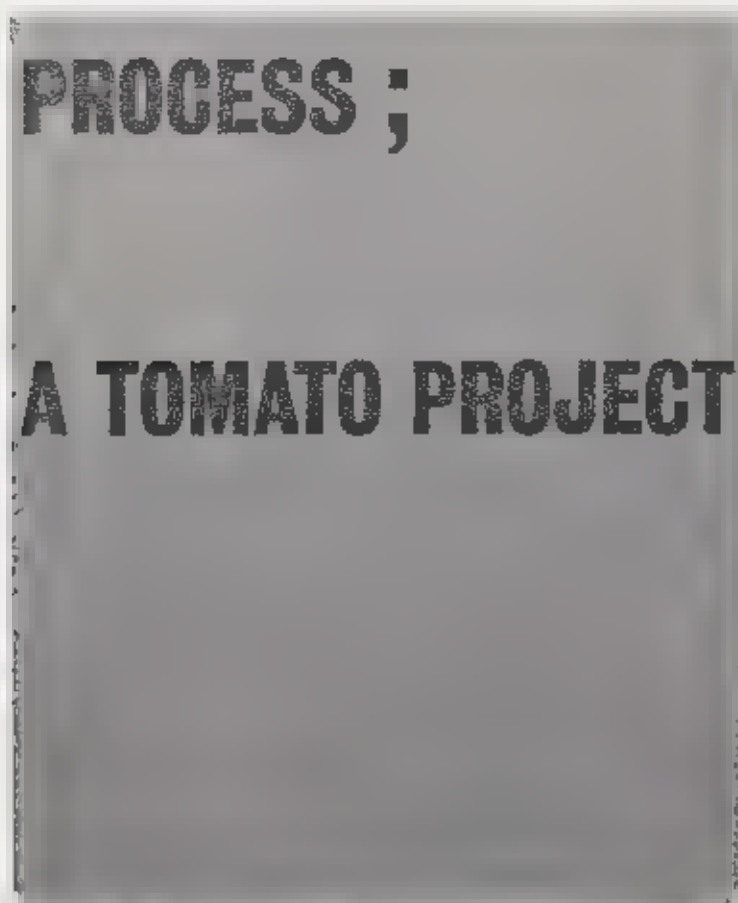
Tomato has a leg up on Fuel in that its collaborative includes mem-

bers who have been working in design since the 1980s. Also, the group currently numbers three times as many members. *Process* may be counted as Tomato's second book, after *Mmm Skyscraper I Love You*, a rarely seen (on this shore) but frequently noted book of a few years ago. Tomato has also assumed the role of distinctly vocal theoreticians on design, with *Process* acting as a declaration in word and deed for its concepts.

Fuel is distinctly less well known but has garnered frequent attention (particularly in *Eye* magazine) over the past three years. Except for these press notices, their work is largely unknown in the U.S. To my knowledge, their U.S. work consists only of a multi-page spread on the work of photographer Jurgen Teller (a collaborator with Fuel on *Pure Fuel*) in a recent issue of *Ray Gun*. Having the opportunity to produce a book so early in one's career makes *Pure Fuel* a singular subject for consideration. For many designers, the fact of such early notoriety doubtless far overshadows whatever their ideas may be. However, the nature of *Pure Fuel* and the overall intent of the designers (as can be discerned in the rare quotes given in the *Eye* articles and the evidently authorized second person interpretations in their book) should focus attention on the work and not the relative inexperience of the group.

## LIKE

*Pure Fuel* is presented as a manifesto of the group's design sensibility. As with Tomato, Fuel has at first glance rejected the traditional monograph. Rather than solely revisiting past client-commissions, the two groups offer their books as original, self-directed works. While both have thus sought to move away from the typical retrospective, they haven't completely erased the impulse. Certain material is recycled or was previewed in other forums (Fuel has





Because of their self-initiated status (content derives from the designers but neither book is self-published), both books are candidates for the slippery realm of graphic authorship. However, the remnants – prominent and oblique – of conventional design monographs place the books in a state of flux. This indeterminate state may be a constituent aspect of graphic authorship. Certainly for Fuel, who stress “ambiguity” as strongly as Tomato intones “process,” such uncertainty is both tool and goal.

*Pure Fuel* is design as content. The introduction leaps to this assertion before all others: "In a society which favours the written word for the dissemination of ideas and opinions, the visual is easily misconstrued as mere decoration." By examining Fuel's artifact, we have an opportunity to describe a different, distinct identity for graphic authorship. While asserting a role that may regularly be called authorial, Fuel never mentions "graphic authorship." Any debate about the term is ultimately immaterial in reading *Pure Fuel*. Graphic authorship is of more interest for the response the concept has generated than as a model for activity. This being said, *Pure Fuel* does provide glimpses of processes that I would propose as marking a new design activity. In many ways, it is a status Fuel attains more by accident than intent.

**Pure Fuel** appears to be an expanded version of one of the group's "magazines." Alongside their commercial projects, Fuel gained at-

tention in the U.K. for a series of self-published, limited edition magazines. The seven works, each bearing a one four-letter-word title (*Girl, Hype, Cash, Dead*, etc.), usually conform to a standard format but have also included a T-shirt. These works introduced the Fuel aesthetic, described in *Pure Fuel* as “their uncompromising brand of graphic design – no frills, edgy, appropriated and naive...” Apart from the force of this approach on its own terms, it provided a distinct difference from how British design was perceived at the time. As Rick Poynor described in *Eye* (in a quote reprinted in *Pure Fuel*), “The raw visual treatment has real freshness and force after a decade of sugary style in British graphic design.”<sup>4</sup>

While unquestionably legitimate, Fuel's design approach is assertively not that of true naifs. The group has chosen to work with a limited palette signifying an unfussy, direct approach. "'Decoration can be confusing,'" Poynor quotes Stephen Sorrell as saying, "'There's no need to flower things up. We are interested in an undesigned look.'" Almost ten years past Robin Kinross's article "The Rhetoric of Neutrality,"<sup>2</sup> we must recognize that Fuel has chosen a graphic strategy as loaded as any other. It has remained firmly within the province of professional design; above, for instance, the cut-and-paste of Jamie Reid. Fuel's manipulation of the rhetoric of "undesigned" and "immediate" serves to differentiate the group from the Why Nots and Tomato. Fuel is, though, as much stylist as those it reacts against – perhaps more so.

Comparing *Pure Fuel* to the group's previous products is problematic. I am relying on reproductions of selected pages for a distant, Fuel-selective experience. Due to the magazine's limited availability, and Fuel's "new kids" status, it was presumably deemed necessary to include the introductory "history" section to their book. Such a

1. Rick Poyner, BOTH ENDS BURNING, Eye, Vol.3, No.11, 1993

2. Robin Kinross, *THE RHETORIC OF NEUTRALITY*, *Design Issues*, ed. by Victor Margolin, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.



move may be expected – and welcome – under the circumstances. But it is a concession from a group trading on an image of being uncompromising. The section undercuts the intended openness to interpretation to tell us these guys aren't just in off the street. Fuel's work overall shows a high comfort level with commercial demands. A marketing concession may not be seen as a concession at all – it's just being a designer.

Striking all prefatory remarks does not guarantee a clear slate. In a visual world that includes appropriators such as Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine, we are far past the point where work can speak for itself. And how different is Fuel's history from an artist's monograph sporting a multi-page listing of exhibitions? The issue is not the dissonance of self-aggrandizement (though the extravagant claims for the book cannot be put aside in evaluating it) but the completeness of intent. Fuel's ostensible strategy is ambiguity and open interpretation. The prefacing in the overview chooses directions for the reader and sets up expectations.

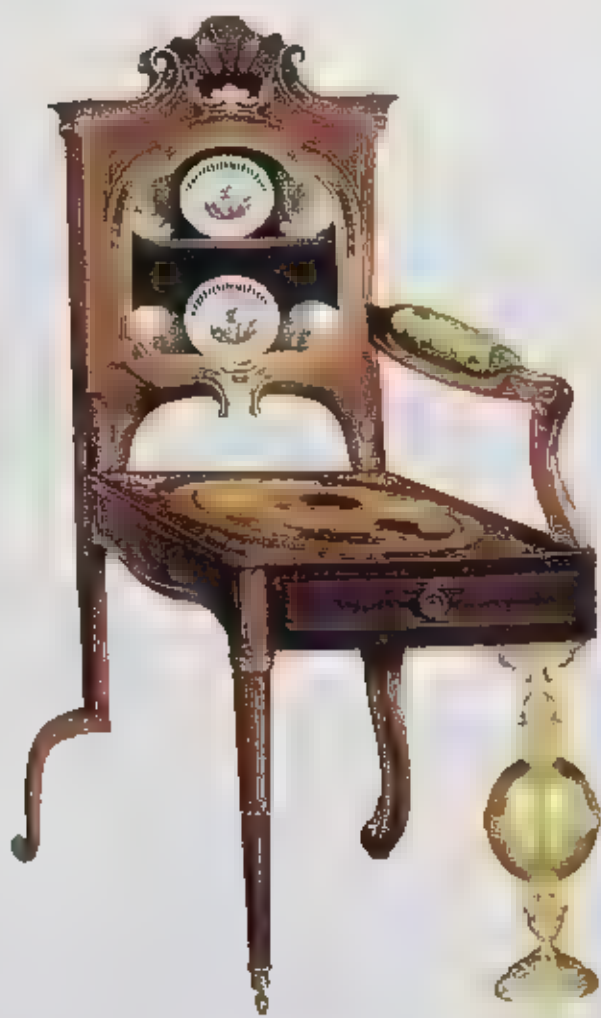
*Pure Fuel* is a conventional, chapter-organized book predominantly of images, interspersed with various texts. Images are mostly photographic but also feature color illustrations and pictograms. The chapters all bear one-word titles: "Function," "Leisure," "Chaos," "Spoilt," etc. No explanatory text enlarges upon the meaning of these terms. The headings may well be arbitrary and substituted with little loss. The book provides an "Index" that contains terse, ordinary descriptions of images or a series of pages. The effect is an illusion of traditional structure without providing a narrative framework. It may also exist as another convention of books that Fuel seeks to distort for an unspecified effect.

The photographs and illustrations surround and play off of brief texts comprising conversations, first- and third-person narratives, or resembling advertising copy, speeches, and instructions. On their own, they are imaginative, evocative, and concise. Banner captions also adorn many images, or are set on facing pages. "Prevent Contact with Eyes" slashes diagonally across a photo of an elderly couple dancing. "Pure product is a product with no application" meets a diagram of a combination clothes-dish-washer-refrigerator-oven. "Real Fruit Flavouring" is set beneath a reproduction of what the Index identifies as a homemade bomb. Scattered throughout the book are snatches of poetry, signage, slogans.

The interaction of the text and image elements – the art direction – makes *Pure Fuel*. Rather than evincing an ambiguity or generating possibilities, most of Fuel's juxtapositions are diagrammatic. The experience of turning to the Index after reading pages is often deflating. A dreamlike story is paired with six pages of photos showing people napping. The Index informs us that a two-page spread painting of a coffin is "Dead." It is the book's final section. Rather than demonstrating extremity or an eclecticism, the text/image interactions just seem quirky. The art direction is rarely as inspired as the stories and often detract from their potential. Aiming for ambiguity, Fuel manages vague.

Fuel's formal talents are considerable. Their handling of text and image is varied and sure. Within their self-imposed limitations, Fuel manages a consistency while thoroughly exploring the permutations of a few elements. Text and images usually appear against stark white backgrounds. When used, solid colors will occasionally bleed off all sides behind elements, or be used as frames or panels. Fuel keeps things moving, demonstrating the possibilities inherent in an

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approach frequently shunned as stolid. Here, the group makes a persuasive case for the viability of their formal method.

Their method includes use of traditional typefaces. A condensed, bold Times is the principal face for *Pure Fuel*, with a Grotesque spotted for contrast. Fuel has expressed a belief that using familiar typefaces will point the reader toward the images and draw less attention to the type itself. While an arguable point, it is muddled by the variegated treatments that text receives. Copy varies in outlines, size, alignments, and measures. Again, it is an able, expressive handling, but hardly plain. The result is not so much that type turns transparent but that the face becomes identified with Fuel.

To set up camp in such occupied territories merits attention. Fuel has forged a distinctive style out of the basic design set and artistic gestures. Their process is one of reclamation and repackaging. Depending on your perspective, the recycling can seem witty or a usurpation. One example is another signature visual device of Fuel: their rough, line-art pictograms. The symbols obviously parody and seek to expand upon common emblems. Fuel's illustrations are strongly reminiscent of artist Matt Mullican's graphics, which study corporate and vernacular symbology. Mullican focused attention on his variations by removing them from context, while Fuel manipulates its symbols in a design setting. The recirculation of imagery through these contexts blurs any sense of origin. Are the commentators commenting upon comments?

#### IMAGERY

Imagery is central to *Pure Fuel*. Most pages are given over to full-bleed photographs or groupings. The selection, juxtapositioning and assemblage of imagery makes up a large part of Fuel's art. Photo-

graphy is the lead instrument in Fuel's design performance.

The imagery also explores the rhetoric of the immediate. Most photos show a studied spontaneity widespread in contemporary fashion photography. Unglamorous subjects and subject matter, harsh and available lighting, ordinary settings. Though brief, the photographic style that predominates in *Pure Fuel* has a distinct lineage.

The style finds its origin in the work of Nan Goldin and her influential 1986 book, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. This collection of photographs was a diary of Goldin's "tribe" – her family and friends at the margins of cultural and sexual mores. The photographs are stark portrayals of these characters that often intrude into the tawdry and startling. Goldin's subculture portraits have now been thoroughly commodified and mainstreamed by numerous fashion photographers. Fuel has invested in this imagery of stylized contentiousness, made familiar and toothless from repetition.

With *Ballad*, Goldin produced a book of her photography that went beyond the monograph to be a work in its own right. Other artists have since explored this medium, creating their own works of graphic authorship. These books approach the art/design intersection from a direction opposite to that of Fuel and provide a sharp perspective.

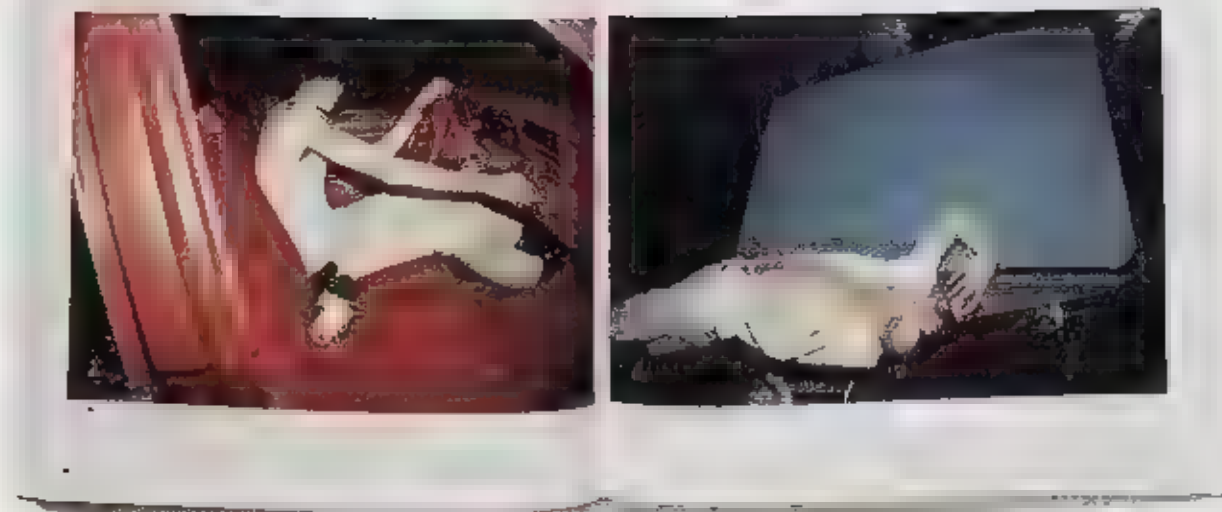
Jack Pierson is one such artist who has released two recent books-as-artworks. Pierson's works are meaningful for comparison because they are graphically sophisticated; the artist has worked as a graphic designer. With Goldin, he shares an interest in documenting daily life and dramatizing the mundane. *All of a Sudden* is an entirely photographic book, comprised only of full-bleed photographs. Meaning may seem here to be wide open. Unidentified individuals in











Nan Goldin, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, 1986



Jack Pierson, *The Lonely Life*, 1997



unspecified or ordinary settings engage in unknown (in)activity. Narrative is simultaneously suggested and denied.

Another recent Pierson book, *The Lonely Life*, more resembles the traditional monograph and *Pure Fuel*. It features the usual introductory appreciations by art writers ahead of Pierson's content. Documentary photographs of his gallery installations are combined with page-encompassing photographs. Prominently featured in the installations – and in close-up photos – are words made up from 3D signage lettering. These terms may be framing or commenting upon the imagery, much as Fuel's chapter headings. Their jumble of type styles suggest movie marquees and decaying signs outside shuttered buildings. Pierson's handling of text and image displays an awareness of the codes of design and their impact upon viewers.

Fuel's work ventures into the territory of these artists and must meet the same standards. Unfortunately, Fuel's production fares badly in the depth of its intellectual investigations. While this may seem a standard criticism of design work, it is ameliorated by Fuel's significant advantage in being designers.

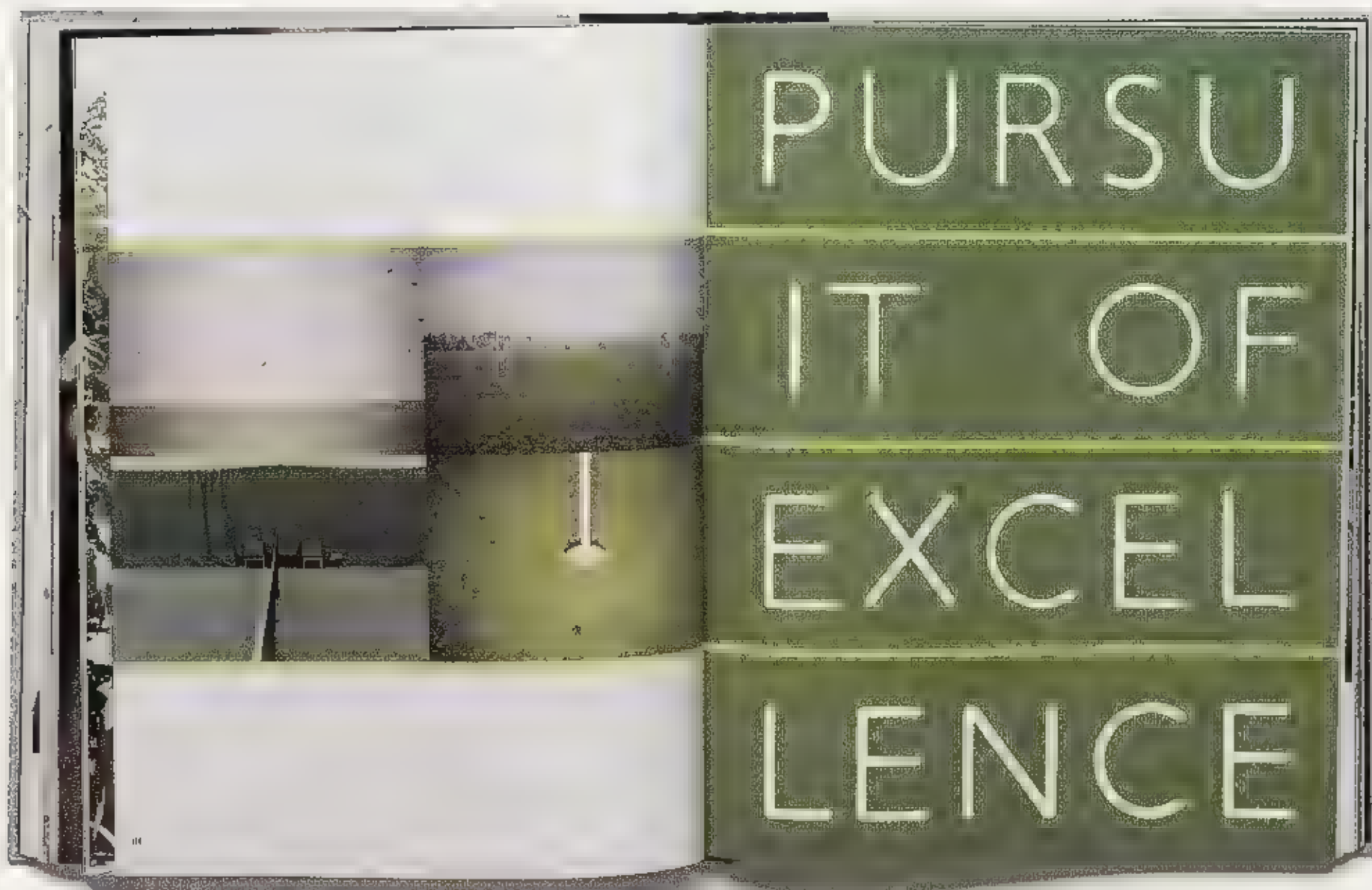
What designers possess is a more profound appreciation and ability in the grammar of design. Most fine art works that feature text and image are unsophisticated. This art-artlessness is not merely formal but in an awareness of how design resonates and is content. Design is the dominant visual medium of our culture. It is on design's terms that most visual production is interpreted by the public. Designers, therefore, should recognize a unique opportunity to define their own terms. Fuel's deficiency is in setting no terms, in unrealized potential.

#### OURS

As a title, *Pure Fuel* is bluntly accurate. The book is Fuel performing their design, while it is about other things. *Pure Fuel* does set itself up as a social commentary. This inaccuracy describes the book's potential and fundamental failing. It may be that this uncertainty is intentional. A theme of contradiction recurs in the book: the cover image of flames issuing from a fire-extinguishing pail, a concrete lifejacket, a Jello helmet. The basic inconsistency of language is proclaimed. Objects express and contradict their function. Fuel declares (again, through Poyner) that it is "trying to have it both ways." Though easily read as a pejorative, it is meant to show how blurred the boundaries are between art and commerce. It is in this domain that Fuel seeks to operate.

At times, *Pure Fuel* resembles a fusion of an issue of *Colors* and the Marshall McLuan/Quentin Fiore collaboration, *The Medium Is the Massage*. But as social commentary or cultural investigation, *Pure Fuel* is thin stuff. The book is far more interesting as a pure design statement: can graphic design be its own content? This is the question of graphic authorship. The debate so far has been constrained. However, it has touched on a unique development in the appreciation and production of graphic material.

The most comprehensive attempt to outline the graphic authorship issue has been by Michael Rock, in his *Eye* magazine article, "The Designer As Author,"<sup>3</sup> and subsequent lecture on the same topic at the "How We Learn What We Learn" conference in New York this past spring. Rock's overview never strays far from traditional conceptions of design activity – and the designer's role within it – and the



3. Michael Rock, THE DESIGNER AS AUTHOR, *Eye*, Vol. 5, No. 20, 1996.



literary theory debate over authorship. The result is unsurprising: "designers (are) designers"; they're not authors, auteurs, or artists. Though they desire and may attain a higher level of involvement, designers only undermine their claim by adopting the authorial banner.

This analysis, which follows the course of the discussion so far on the topic, overemphasizes the importance of the term "author." The irony may be that the designers most deserving of the title have little interest in it. In addition, the process designers undertake to create the work – and the role graphic design plays within it – is only glanced at. Emphasis is upon the final product and the designer's stylistic trace.

Though wide-ranging in the types of works he considers, Rock also curiously omits a major recent work from his inventory. His oversight of Elliott Earls's *Throwing Apples at the Sun* is puzzling due to the attention afforded the work and its unique one-man-show origin. As a artifact of graphic authorship, Earls's project could declare itself as a defining example of the genus. What *Throwing Apples* also does is elude and overstep the categories Rock creates for graphic authorship. It may have been that including the work would upset the argument. *Pure Fuel* and *Process* also rest uneasy in this formulation.

Investigating the literary theoretical debate over authorship is understandable, as it has been a prominent influence in design for more than a decade. Some designers who have claimed graphic authorial status have also championed the postmodern critique – setting up an incongruity. But this self-canceling state does not hold for all aspiring graphic authors. And a claim to that status may be accompanied by a novel conception of creative process. One might be called an author and be both flattered and disinterested.

Literary theory's translation into graphic design terms, as many have pointed out, is dubious. Design involves both text and image and their interrelation. For many designers, use of the term "author" is only a metaphor to point towards a new role in the creative process and the search for a new language. As writers, it's understandable that Foucault and Barthes obsess over "authorship." Designers should be aware of their critiques while recognizing the limitations. As design is inextricably linked to other cultural productions, it's meaningful to look to other disciplines for insight on how those cultural products come about and are perceived.

#### NOTE

Graphic authorship may be part of a larger shift in creative production. Comparisons of design to literature and film reveal more flaws than is useful (film theorists having abandoned the design-popular "auteur" theory altogether). An area that has demonstrated a marked change in creative roles, technological revolution, and wide-ranging cultural import is music. Here is a model that provides healthier possibilities in appreciating design's cultural role. It is also a field that has had a heavy influence on design, not only for being a progressive client.

Brian Eno has been a consistently clear-minded and insightful commentator on music and culture (and, not coincidentally, design). A paraphrasing of his comments – given over a number of years in various interviews – describes a new paradigm in music, and perhaps in design.

Eno identifies the true innovation of contemporary music as *timbre*. This may be described as the sonic attributes and qualities of recorded music, separate from the notes. It is primarily spoken of as the





use of the recording studio as instrument to sculpt sound. Traditionally – particularly in classical music – musicians have been primarily concerned with *fidelity*. The score is to be performed as accurately as possible and the acoustic properties center solely on clarity. In other words, a sender/receiver/no-noise situation.

Popular music, arising with and because of technological innovations in recording, explores additional dimensions of sound. Sound may be manipulated via an array of effects on the specific instruments and in the recording process. A common example is the echo chamber. The notes are the same, but a sonic environment has been created that affects the listener's emotional response to the music.

What this opens up is emotional properties of sound – and a new grammar. As Eno explains, he can put a Dwayne Eddy guitar solo on a song and get double credit: first for the inherent quality of the performance, and secondly, for the associative resonance that is brought by the particular tonality of the guitar playing. You think, *yeah...the fifties. Early days of rock'n'roll. Hot rods. Etc.*

This sonic realm doesn't exist for classical music but is the primary concern of contemporary musicians. Traditional composers work only with ordering notes. Contemporary musicians are interested in creating new sounds, unique sonic experiences. For classical listeners, feedback is only bad sound. It is *non-music*. However, for millions of others, that "noise" carries – and is – information.

A major outgrowth of this shift in how music is performed and perceived is the creation of new roles within the music profession. The "producer" has come into prominence, though the activity of the individual holding that title varies widely. Also, the former techni-

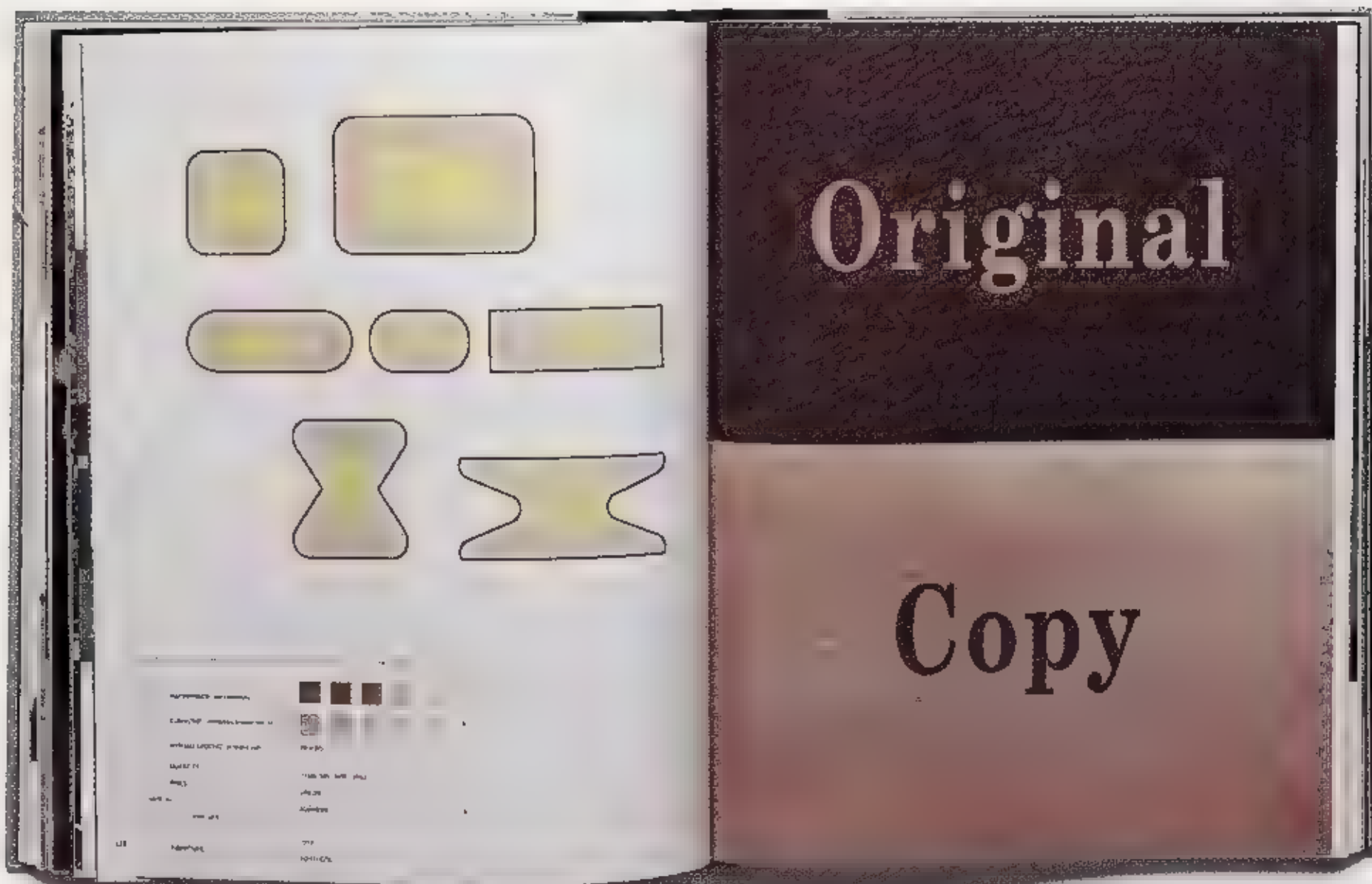
cians of music – engineers, mixers – have come to the fore as artists. Are these people *musicians*? Is a performer – whose music can never be reproduced "live" – who samples extensively a composer? Is it creative to "remix" a song? Does it matter?

An analogy to design can be constructed. Fidelity, clarity, and noise suppression have all been historic concerns of graphic design. Now, with the influx of computer technology and cultural turns in how visual material is perceived, roles are breaking down and mutating. Designers are probing the areas *between and around* text and image, performing the rhetoric of design, exploring the grammar. In a way, the evolution of the "designer" itself is a sign of this cultural shift, predating the change in music.

This is the area in which graphic design authorship resides. Design has been in the culture long enough for its grammar to have become apparent. The vernacular obsession is a recognition of a design language that can be manipulated. Of course, most designers are engaged in a prosaic handling of design's grammar. Instead of starting from zero, designers regularly follow established formats to crank out magazines, brochures, annual reports, and so on. It's why everything looks like everything else. A "graphic author" seeks to access and expand upon the grammar of design to produce unique, self-determined works.

#### TUNE

This context of graphic timbre is the one where *Pure Fuel* shows the most promise. The theme of social commentary in *Pure Fuel* may be regarded the same way that "love" is a frequent theme of pop songs. It isn't that the composers are being insincere but that each song isn't a direct outgrowth of a personal experience. Most tunes





are truly about verse-chorus-bridge. *Pure Fuel* is design using social commentary as subject matter.

The problem arises if Fuel is claiming a position as cogent commentators. As such, their observations are usually correct but trite and derivative. It is difficult to imagine a heated political debate arising around *Pure Fuel*. It's hard to discern what Fuel's statements are if they exist. Fuel's shallow and uncertain takes on pressing concerns are likely counterproductive to debate. Again, their sincerity need not necessarily be questioned; however, their treatment begs that conclusion.

Fuel is not alone in this predicament, striding into a trap that has claimed many victims in fine art. To be serious artists, you must address a serious topic. (Tomato has selected another established serious method: high intellectualism.) After the collapse of the overheated art market of the 1980s, artists turned to "issues art" to (re)claim legitimacy as vanguards of culture. Artists swarmed over various social problems to provide content for their productions. Often, the works became "commentaries" merely by alluding to certain social situations. Simply placing a crucifix on your work (or immersing it in your urine) became a commentary on the Catholic Church (though Serrano insisted – perhaps disingenuously, considering other of his photographs – his notorious *Piss Christ* was about the qualities of light and color seen through his micturation).

To be doing important art, an artist now had to be a social commentator. Works were professedly about prejudice, intolerance, child abuse, et al., and not about artists making salable pieces. The result was a glut of self-congratulatory and unconvincing works that provided little respite or solution for the weighty problems they sup-

posedly addressed. The apotheosis of this movement in the U.S. was the 1993 Whitney Biennial, which focused solely on such work. Even by the standards of this regularly rebuked exhibition, the show was resoundingly condemned.

This is not to say that controversial topics are off-limits to artists inexperienced in a particular adversity. It is to point out how "social commentary" has become subject matter for artists and been thoroughly occupied. Artists always need to address some particular topic to be considered "serious." (An innovation may be defined as a situation in which an artist is able to expand the definition of what is considered serious art.) Various unlikely subjects have been put forth as being conduits to enlightenment on the human condition: portraiture, landscape, abstraction. Each have produced revelations (and still do) but are now predominantly the domain of formalists.

Unfortunately, many designers transpose artistic concerns to their field rather than forging a unique design identity. If serious art is socially aware, serious design must be, also. In attempting to differentiate themselves from the "sugary stylists," Fuel has adopted a rhetoric of graphic immediacy and cultural investigation. Their work suffers when compared with other design works presenting commentary. Placed alongside the posters of the Guerrilla Girls, for instance, or a Barbara Kruger work, Fuel shows itself as naive in intellect – not in design.

Another concern that is frequently overlooked in issues-oriented work is the forum in which the work is encountered. True radicalism likely lies not in the subject matter or handling of material but by who and how it is marketed. (The real difference between art and design is the market the creator enters it into.) How activist can art





be when it is isolated in a gallery out of sight of – and with a price tag beyond – the reach of most people? And are they buying it for the commentary or the aesthetic qualities?

*Pure Fuel* was not contracted for by Booth-Clibborn as a political document. It was published as a slick design tome to sell to a category of designers attracted by the critical/stylist buzz around Fuel. That *Pure Fuel* costs \$50 and is found on the Graphic Design shelves of the bookstore is the end-all-be-all of its status as a social commentary. (Though it's much more affordable than your common art gallery object. Another advantage for design.)

#### RAVE

Designers can and should be creating works that delve into commentary but this demands choices many designers are loathe to make. One is to talk about themselves first person.

As in traditional monographs, Fuel allows others to describe them and their work. In other recent books by controversial designers – *Emigre: The Book* and *The End of Print* – the principals hover just off-stage, being quoted by the stated authors of the text. An odd dislocation results that may be born of an attempt at objectivity or humility. The design, however, is so manifest that such deference seems misplaced.

*Process* breaks from this pattern with first person narrative throughout; Tomato interprets itself. (The final essay of *Process* argues at length on the perils of separating creator from interpreter and calls for artists to speak up.) Fuel distinguishes itself by a total textual absence: no quotes, no direct statements. All writing comes from outside sources. This conservative aspect combines with other

conventions to make *Pure Fuel* less than the uncompromising work it claims to be.

Having decided to remain mute about themselves, why have *any* explanatory text? The boldness of the claims made about Fuel on the dust jacket and in the introduction place a great deal of pressure on the work. Since they have presented the total book as their work,

Most are superlatives. We are to witness "elements of the everyday and the shocking, which leave the viewer alternately confused and enlightened." *Pure Fuel* "encourages the audience to form its own opinion on the content. By juxtaposing unexplained, or simply inexplicable, visual and verbal fragments they orchestrate an ambiguous manifesto in an attempt to reanimate the act of reading. Meaning, whether communicated through words and pictures, is never simply fixed."

Along with being highly contentious, these statements have become the buzz words of a progressive design. Their terse, declaration-of-fact presentation hollowly echo more investigative designers. The claims become a list of ingredients rather than a proposal. Because such terms are so well known in the market for which *Pure Fuel* is intended, such condensation is possible. Designers may not need their act of *reading* reanimated but designers selling design books need to reanimate the act of *designing*. Or at least give the appearance that they are. The possibility is remote that the design crowd buying *Pure Fuel* will be shocked or confused by the content. By Fuel's choice, everyone else is unlikely to see the book.

#### MEHL

Does the very existence of *Pure Fuel* undermine its claim to be



extreme and provocative? Booth-Clibborn has invested significant resources into this book and rightly expects a return. It obviously believes there is a market: a demographic interested in design with a cachet of challenging the status quo but with definitive credentials in the field. *Pure Fuel* does stumble into a provocative area of graphic authorship but is hedged. Their ambiguity is less a response to a cultural situation than a blunting of tough questions involving commercialism and production.

How daring is it to be indeterminate? Wouldn't a forceful, articulate, socially-conscious position be truly extreme? Fuel's boldness exists only within the narrow confines of standard graphic design practice. Here, glossing over ethical concerns is commonplace. What usually passes for values is insisting on timely payment and befitting credit. The social and cultural impact of one's work is a subject on which to dissemble. How contrarian then is Fuel's obscurity? We are left with wholly conventional self-promoters, talented and shrewd. These have been the ends of mainstream design for some time.

The clients that designers work for are always telling. As have other progressive designers – such as Tomato – Fuel's work has primarily been for businesses heavily invested in style. Their client list is a roster of usual suspects: youth-oriented fashion, designer footwear, techno bands, MTV. These clients are not *de facto* objectionable, but it is worth considering why certain designers naturally gravitate here. Both Fuel and Tomato skirt around the significance of their associations. Fuel employs known ironic gestures of anti-fashion. They burn the client's product in photographs, or play with themes on the evils of consumerism.

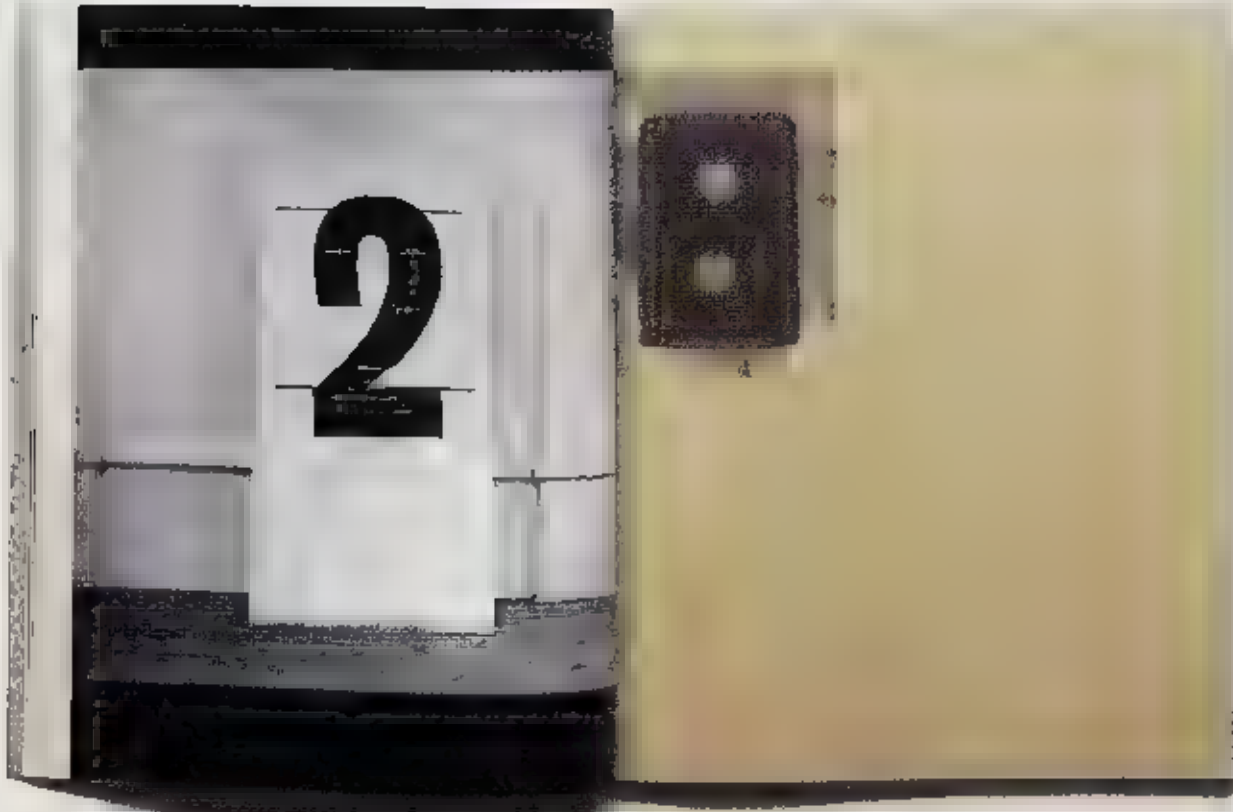
Tomato momentarily encounters this dilemma in the final extended text segment of *Process*: "...it's ironic then that personal work and experimentation...should find its voice and space in the world of commerce." The discussion goes no further. The essay veers off again into the abstract, intellectualized mode Tomato regularly employs. The real question of what is actually occurring when businesses hire Fuel and Tomato is left hanging. Of course, commerce is not buying into these designers' theories of ambiguity or process. It is purchasing style.

Tomato admirably seeks to expand and defy creative boundaries. But their process always ends when the client calls, though a particular visual exploration may not. From their text, it seems as if all the members of the group could get caught up painting on velvet if their process led them there. (This "process," though repeated like a mantra, is never explicated in a practical working situation.) If so, will Tomato say "No" to Nike if it comes asking for a TV commercial? Will they instead offer a rendering of the Las Vegas Elvis? If process really rules, their list of dissatisfied clients and rejected commissions should be long.

Tomato is, however, attempting to engage a debate and take public risks with stated ideas. *Process* is an engaging demonstration of what might be possible with a new graphic hybrid. *Pure Fuel* also shows the potential for this new work, but it's questionable if the creators are able to or interested in pursuing it. Fuel's use of theory so far has been a veneer. Otherwise, their aspiration is to be Big Name Designers. That's no less legitimate than wanting to write interminable essays for *Emigre*. It is up to Fuel where their ambition lies. Brian Eno may again be an example as a obscure musical theoretician who also produced the world's biggest rock band. Eno







Tomato, Process; A Tomato Project, 1997



happily sells (maybe) tens of thousands of his own CDs while U2 deals in tens of millions. Locating oneself in the artistic/commercial matrix need not be straightforward.

It would help Fuel's claim of social concern if they were engaging clients with social interests. (Memo to designers: Amnesty International isn't the only activist organization out there.) Fuel's considerable talents might aid a number of organizations desperately in need of attention-getting graphics. If the group is shy about leaving popular culture, there are musicians whose ideals would mesh with Fuel's style. Association with Billy Bragg or Oysterband would dramatically upgrade Fuel's awareness and spiff up some packaging.

#### LAST

With their books, Fuel and Tomato insist upon and deserve a new perspective in evaluating their work. The direction they have chosen – design as content – is valid. Their results differ but share an inability to get fully with the program. Tomato might provide a reading list for Fuel while getting instruction on how to stop making sense. Trying to have it both ways cuts two ways. What is available to Fuel, and all designers, is a *myriad* of possibilities. The obligation is thinking *beyond* the page into the world of actions. *How* you do it is not as important as *what* you do with it.

Fuel has perhaps crafted a more telling symbol for itself than it realized. The final page of *Pure Fuel* shows their signature emblem: a mirror-image gas pump, feeding on itself. Fuel's energy, its product, propels itself, endlessly circulating, with no outlet. It is good that designers are looking at themselves more closely and empowering themselves. But the gaze must be exacting – and outward. What is revealed when two mirrors are facing?

#### ENDS





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**Ray Gun – Out Of Control**  
Simon & Schuster, \$45.00, 240 pages, 1997  
ISBN 0-684-83980-6

Introduction by William Gibson.

Essays by Chris Bilheimer, Marvin Scott Jarrett, Dean Kuipers, David Bowie,  
Mark Blackwell, Rick Poynor, and Michael Stipe

Designed by Chris Ashworth and Neil Fletcher (Substance)

# PUT MY HEAD TO YOUR RAY GUN

## THE MARVIN S. JARRETT STORY

REVIEW BY BILL GUBBINS





**Buyer beware! Buyer beware!** Lest you think this opus is *End of Print II* or that it's *only* about *Ray Gun*, I'm here to *adjust that attitude* right out of the old starting box. I would not want any of you buying another hefty brick for your tax-deductible design book collection under a false pretense, that's for sure!

No, this book's true subject matter, its hidden agenda, is nothing less – or more – than a “greatest hits” collection of magazines created or published by Marvin Jarrett (Marvin Scott Jarrett to you, *Mister Eaves*), including *Ray Gun*, *huH*, *Bikini*, and others glorified in this coffee table compilation.

So, yes – but of course! – you'll get your fill (or re-fill, if you've seen it all before) of the *Carsonian* phase of *Ray Gun*, and you'll also get – at no extra charge! – a heapin' platterful of the design work of Robert Hales, Chris Ashworth and Neil Fletcher (of *Substance*), and Jérôme Curchod, among the many others who've followed in Dave Carson's brave, primo-design, workin'-for-Marvin steps.

So, just as long as you understand there's a little truth in packaging thing here, and you don't expect another *total Cascade* of Carson (or of *Ray Gun*), well then, *crack the spin* and start rea – uh, looking...

No, no, just a second. We've still got to *contextualize the cog d.* of a book about a magazine *publisher*, when the genre conventions are that usually you have to be a designer, editor, or even writer to have one of these commemoratives done about you.

Hmmm – how did this unconventional thing happen? Well I really don't know, but I'll *conjecturize* that: 1. Jarrett's and Carson's book deals got crossed up (Carson signed with Chronicle while Marvin was

hustling *S&S*) and throwing the rest of Marvin's *oeuvre* in was a last-minute attempt to not have it not be *too* similar to *End of Print*, or, 2. Maybe Marvin finally just got honked off at how famous his discovery, his protégé, his Main Man, Carson has gotten and this is his revenge, or, 3. Hell's bells, maybe somebody just watched *End of Print* fly out the door and figured it was time to quickly cash in before the next Next Big Thing came rolling along.

Since the subject of this book really is Marvin and his fine *magazinal* creations, we've just got to “live it or live with it,” right? (And I don't have any problem with publisher as *auteur*, creative force, all that, do you?)

Yet, as try-so-hard *cool* and *hip* as all the shit that's poured in here is, *The Marvin S. Jarrett Story* is really an American Dream-come-true tale as good-old-fashioned corny as anything from Frank Capra, or Robert Waller, or Joe and Frank Torre, whatever, complete with an upbeat, happy (so far) ending! Oh yeah: a young man grows up lonely and forlorn in the Floridian sticks of America only to pull himself up by his bootstraps and....

Nah, I want Marvin to say it himself. In fact, I'll perform a public service by sweeping away all the “stunning” (actual book dust-jacket blurb) design jumble performed on his intro, clean it up, and excerpt it here, so it's *easy to read*. Take it away, Mar-vin:

“I remember reading music magazines when I was thirteen, growing up in a small town in Florida.... Back then, magazines were our only source of information about music, and I craved getting those new issues... I used to buy whatever I could get my hands on – *Rolling Stone*, *Crawdaddy*, *Circus* and *Creem*....”





"As I was growing up... magazines continued to be my passion... I dreamed of doing my own... Maybe that's what I'm trying to do with my own magazines, is to create that physical connection between the artist and their fans." (Almost John Lennon-y, huh? You know: "Come together... over me" – italics mine, natch.)

So, that's it – we found it: the meaning of Marvin's own Rosebud! His magazines are all really *homages* to those great ones of yore he loved so much, the periodicals that rescued him from the loneliness and desperation of his teen years. Fantastic; the sand in Marvin's oyster was... *Crawdaddy!* Yes, in the spirit of the heroine (not heroin) of Lou Reed's "Rock'n'Roll," Marvin's life was saved by "rock'n' roll"... magazines!

But who among us *hasn't* been inspired by a magazine (especially in our youth), who among us *hasn't* memorized the delivery schedules of our fave raves, who among us *hasn't* felt that wonderful *reality transcendence* that only a great magazine can provide? That's the easy part, though. The hard part, of course, is: can you start a new magazine that does for others what yours did for you, can you pass the *magic on*?

Well God love 'im, Marvin *did* pull it off, and it's indubitable that, yes, *Ray Gun* has had a lot of influence and that, yes, the next generation of little Marvin's are reading (and getting inspired by) *RG* in drug stores and 7-11s across the grand old US of A and in distant foreign countries way beyond our shores. And for that, and that alone, Marvin deserves all the credit and monographical tomes like this he can get.

But wait a second, though: how should we view Marvin and his role

here, since he really didn't *do* any of the fine stuff in his magazines, or in this book for that matter. What do we call him? Mentor? Visionary? Nice boss?

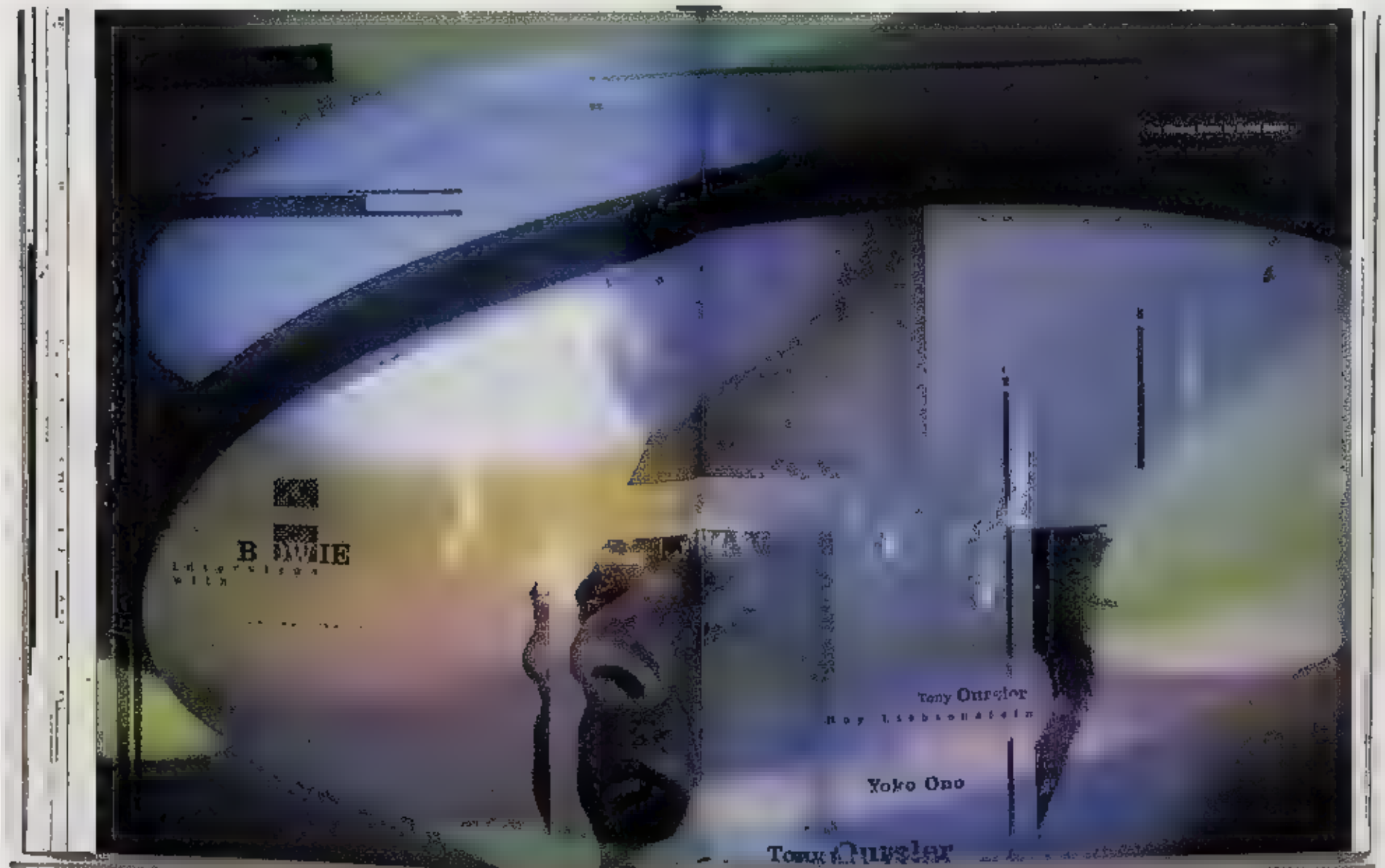
Well, in the rock 'n' roll spirit of this, I have chosen to see him as a grand *impresario*, along the lines, say, of great ones like Colonel Tom Parker, Malcolm McLaren, Russell Simmons, *et al.* So, if that tracks, then Marv sure found a great Elvis/Johnny Rotten/Run front man in his "discovery" of the designer and prime mover of *Ray Gun* (at least in its formative years), the aforementioned David Carson.

Ah, yes, and speaking of American dreams, designers and designettes, would you please welcome... David Carson. Yes, Marvin plucked David from the relative design annual/Sun Records obscurity of *Beach Culture* and brought him up to the *Ray Gun* "bigs," thereby giving him the national stage on which to do his thing. And what a thing it was.

Even though most of you visual stimulant seekers have seen most of Dave's legendary *RG* work many, many times before, it's still great, and all well worth another look. (And if you think I'm gonna do any wiseass runs on DC's work you're wrong, cause it was cool then, still looks cool now [and some of it is over five years old!] and yes I really do think it's the greatest thing since sliced... Presstype.) Yes, another wonderful look at all the Carson Classics: the Frank Black cover and spreads, the Rock for Choice opening spread, the Burning Spears things, his *fantastic* Iggy collaboration with Matt Mahurin, etc. Carson backlash or no, he's just good, friend, he's very good.

And Robert Hales, one of *Ray Gun*'s post-D.C. designers, ain't no small shakes hisown self. I was pleasantly surprised to realize that

32





many of my own personal *Ray Gun* loves (like the Beck cover, the Manic St. Preachers spreads, and the DJ Krush style section opener) were done by Hales, not Carson. (As for the other RG designers... oh they're all okay, they're fine, but nothing to write *Graphis* about, you know?)

However, I must now spew some caution directly into my own wind by saying the following: I do not now, nor did I then, buy into the jibber that RG was some sort of avant-a-deluxe, revolutionary, paradigm-shifting message from the great beyond blah, blah, blah (very clever name for a magazine).

Yes, yes, it's great and all that, but it's more a continuation of paths already set by *hoards* of predecessors, all of whom probably took more risks (and probably more shit) for their rule-breaking work than Carson or RG. My own short list of influential predecessors would include Wyndham Blast Lewis, Kurt Schwitters, Robert Rauschenberg, and, perhaps most significantly, Cal Schenkel, the unheralded *savant* who did all the great Mothers of Invention/Frank Zappa graphics in the late '60s/early '70s. So it's all good, u-huh, most definitely; revolutionary or whatever? I just don't think so.

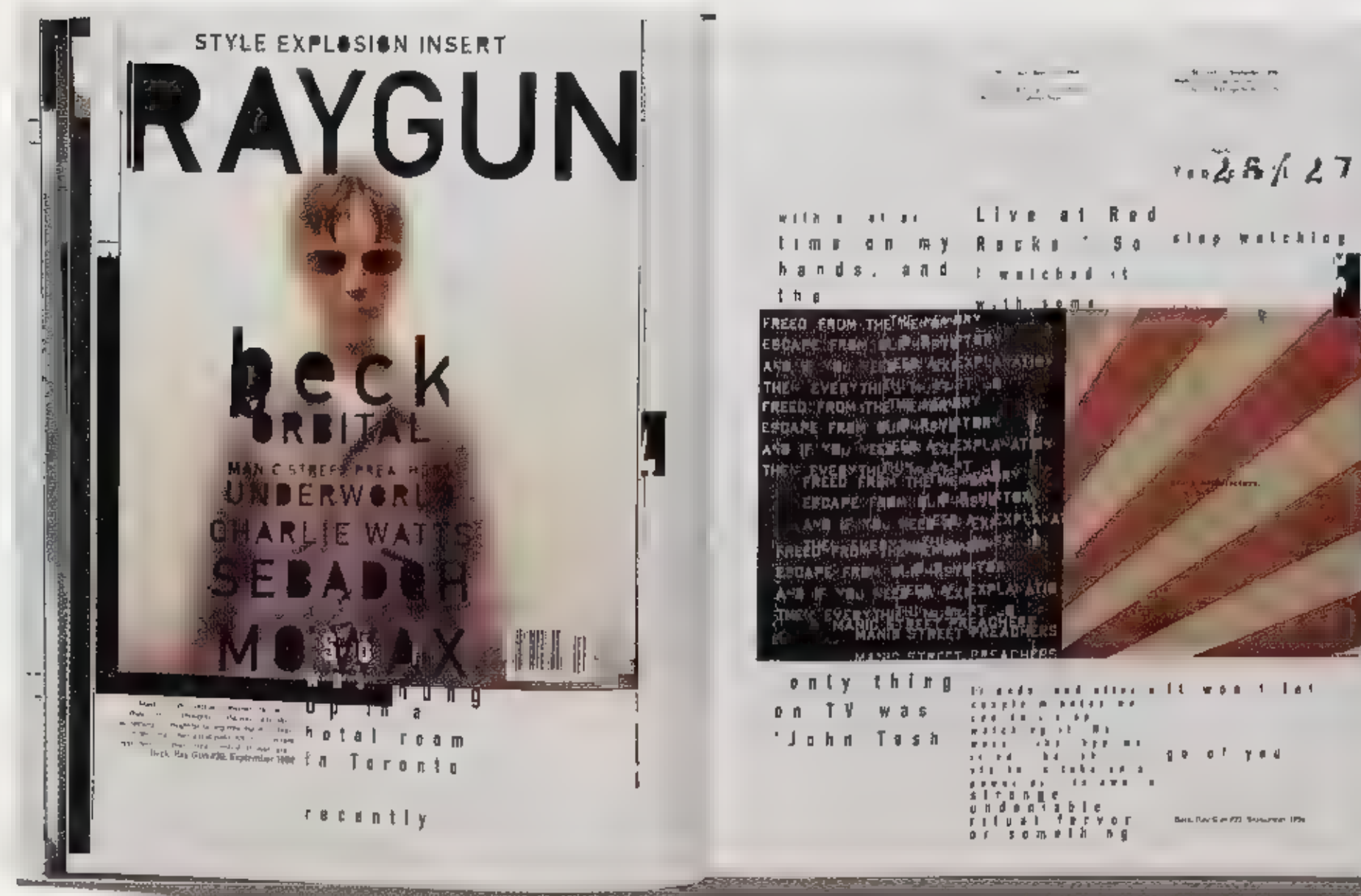
In fact, one could argue that, given *Ray Gun*'s subject matter and content, its design style was anything but revolutionary, it was the *easy solution*. I mean, "Hmmm, the music we're covering is funky and sloppy, so... so... Hey gang! Let's have the design be funky and sloppy, too!" Yes – let the content dictate the graphic style. Why has no one ever thought of this before! Wow – how rational, how logical, how... how *form follows function*! (Now when Carson re-designs life insurance actuarial tables or your health benefits

brochure, that's one revolution that *will* be televised.)

Alright, alright, yes, we all agree: *Ray Gun*'s great to look at... now if only – *sigh* – if only its content, its words, its editorial vision was anywhere *near* as good as its design... now that would be something, really would be something. Had it been so, we might have had one of the truly great mags of the 20th Century.

Unfortunately, sad to say, RG's content is hardly revolutionary, in fact it's: basically the same old "rock star" jizmo we've been Kleenexing up for the past 33-1/3 years or so. It's mostly bland interviews with "stars," but with a twist: their comments are jumbled into graphically enhanced pseudo-profundity. It's the same old same old: the gazillionth interview with David Bowie, the obligatory nod to Iggy and all the other usual suspects. Even interviews with/stories about new bands have a tired feeling, as if they'd already done it a million times before. And, having celebs interview other celebs is not my idea of breakthrough editorial execution. Maybe if Marvin had spent as much time reading old issues of *Nova* or Ralph Ginzburg's *Avant Garde* or even Tib's *Colors* as he did rummaging through design annuals (he mentions this in his intro), maybe *Ray Gun* might really have been something, instead of just *look good*.

Of course, if we talk about the words of *Ray Gun*, then we've got to whip the old dead "readability" horse again. But hold on: I have *no trouble* with hard-work readability, just as long as what you read is worth reading once you finally figure out how to read it! And in *Ray Gun* it seldom was (is?)! The words in *Ray Gun* always seemed to have lost their mission; seemed forlorn, out of place, unsure of what was expected of them. (Think of an oboist sitting in with Black





Flag, or Henry Rollins jamming with Kenny G., and I hope you'll get the picture.) I just wish the writing were up to the speed of the graphics, that Marvin had found his own Lester Bangs the way he found his Carson, that's all. But the form/content bottom line: the same old shit stuffed into a new bag as form pounds the crap outta function.

And, speaking of words losing their mission, it's a continuity that holds true right through to this book (nobody can accuse Marvin of being inconsistent!). The problem here, as in *Ray Gun*, is the words. See, they rounded up a bunch of "essential tastemakers" (actual book dustjacket blurb) to scratch their heads and try to ponder what Marvin's magazines really *mean*. Everyone from cyberstar Billy Gibson to *Ray Gun* editor Duane Kuipers to *Eye* creator Rick Poynor all take a crack – without much success. With the exception of a few comments by Bruce S, M, X, XL Mau, they all seem as helpless (and forlorn) as Ricky Wurman strugglin' to load all his TED money bags onto the Brinks truck for a fast Monterey getaway ~ without a porter!

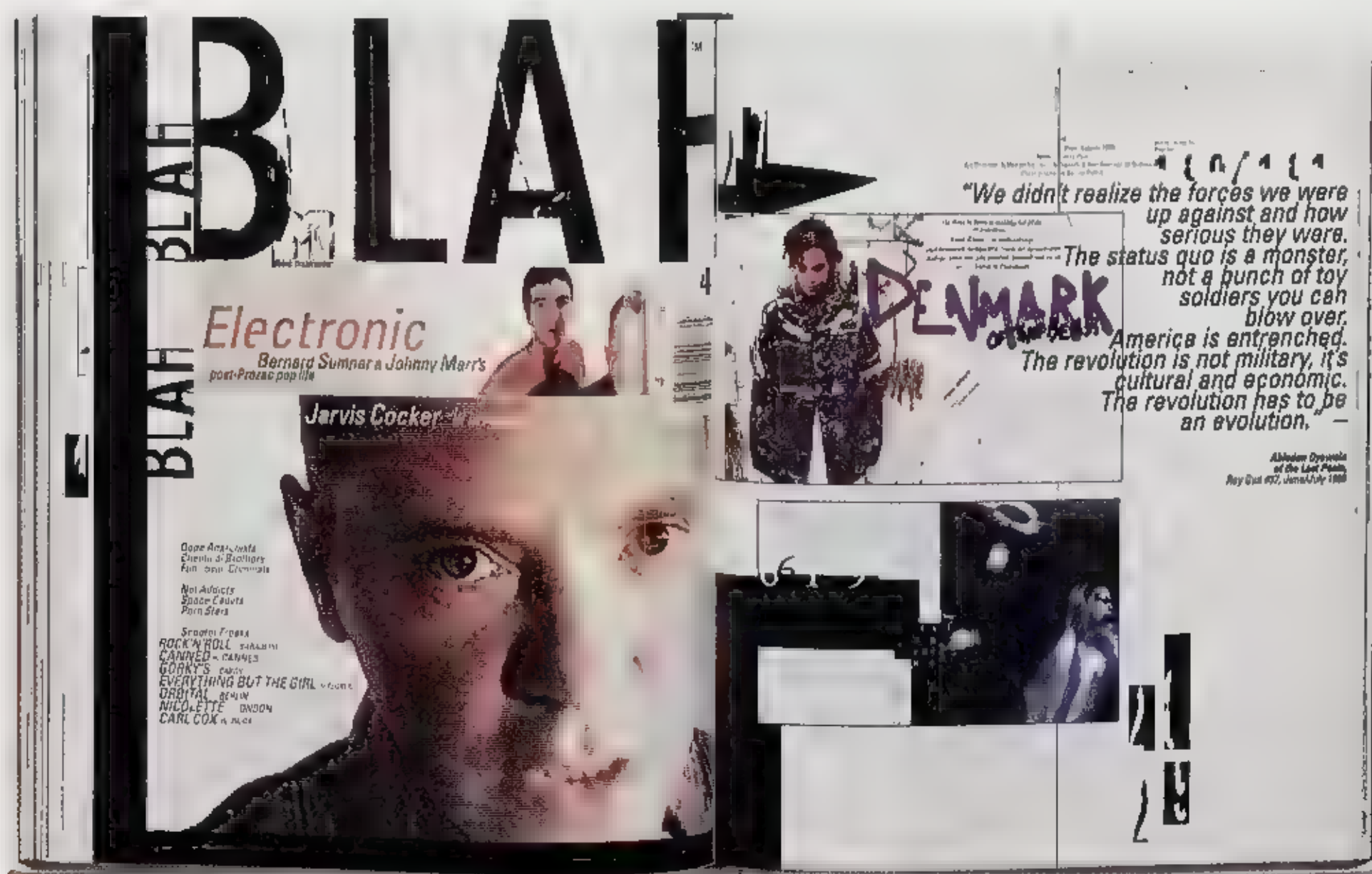
(And yes, I too ponder why all this mess works so well – beats me, but it sure does. But I'll just take the lazy route, and [from deep left field] quote folkie Iris DeMent, and say: "Let the mystery be.")

Oh yeah, right, Marvin's other mags (*hUH*, *Bikini*, *Blah Blah Blah*, et al, blah, blah, blah). Sure, sure, there are flashes in a few of 'em, but none come even close to that *just right* feeling of *Ray Gun*, and they all definitely suffer by the comparison. (On the other hand, how many great first CDs are followed by great seconds? Damn few, Sugar, damn few.)

Now we all know about David Carson and his post-RG fame and endorsements. But where has all this *sturm und drang* left Marvin? Why, with his conventional happy ending, of course.

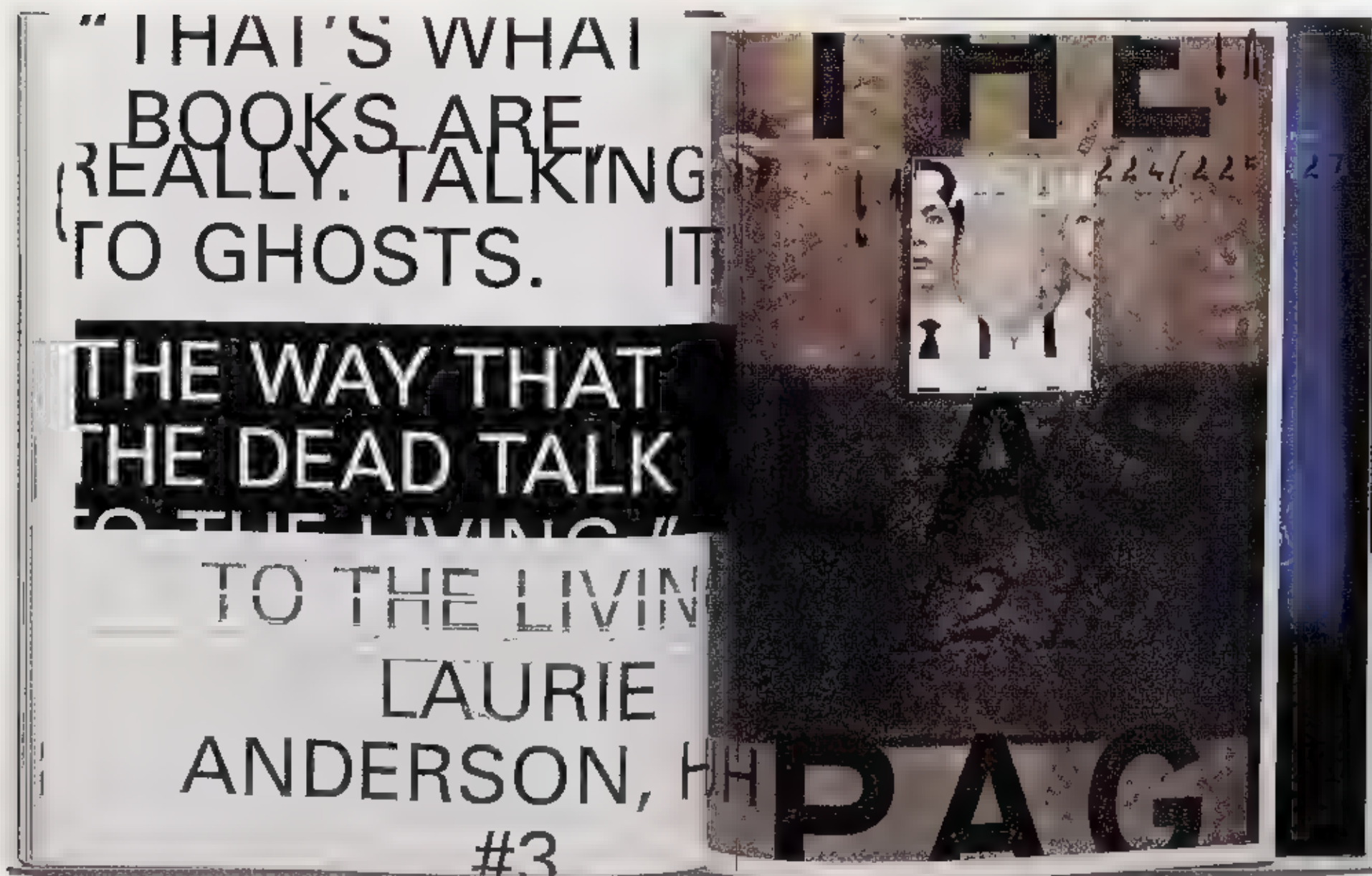
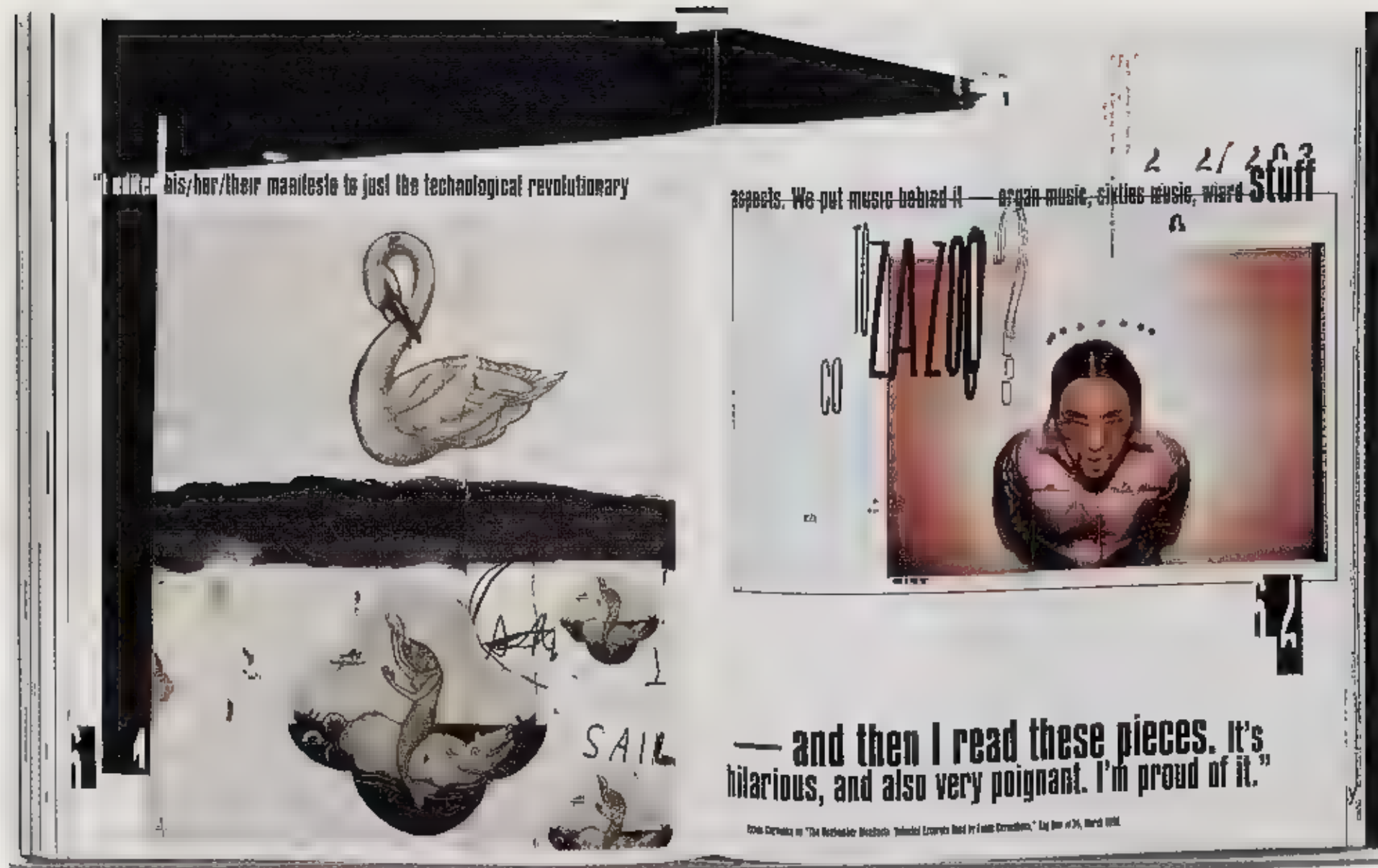
"...I believe magazines are magic. They took me from a small town in Florida and brought me to LA where I live happily with my wife Annie and my two dogs..."

34



While a senior executive at Whittle Communications, Bill Gubbins created the controversial Channel One. He understands you will hold this against him.







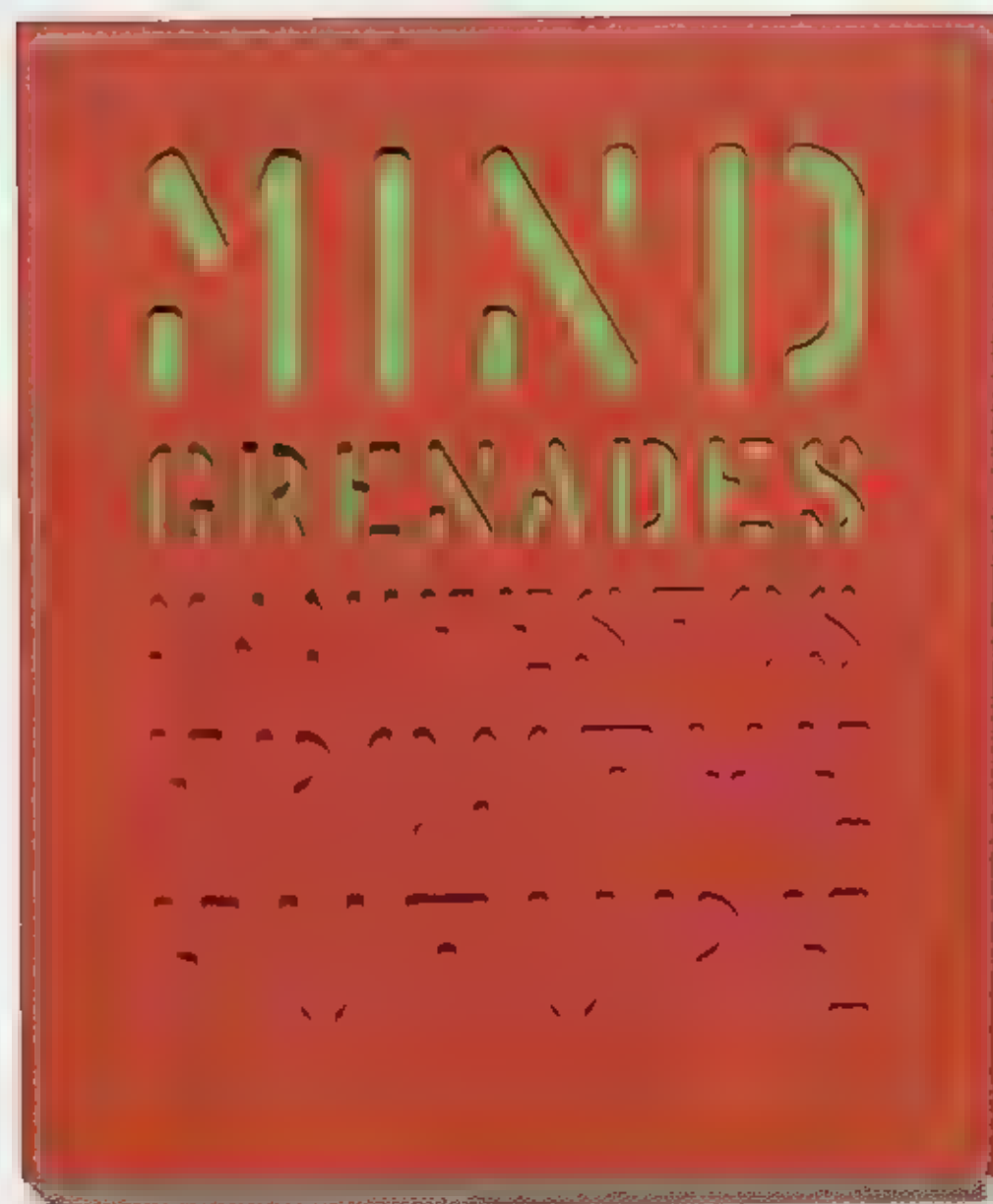
Mind Grenades: Manifestos from the Future  
HardWired, \$32.95, 160 pages, 1997  
ISBN 1-888669-00-3

Design and editorial direction by John Plunkett and Louis Rossetto

# DUTY NOW FOR THE FUTURE

REVIEW BY SHAWN WOLFE

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"In an age of deforested biomes and Panic Style, print will increasingly come to be considered a 'vanity media': wasteful and distasteful... and so the question of how or why it is used at all will become moot. The First World customer will discover new uses for the printed page however and these may or may not have anything to do with the conveyance of messages. In fact, the value of printed matter may eventually come to be measured solely by its uselessness, or its obsolescence: that is, by its status as Perpetual Novelty Item. That's why print will gladly undergo the painfully slow, terminally stylish and irrelevant Presentation Of Its Own Demise. A presentation of 'remains' that are unburdened by content or meaning. The readership will then dismantle the Ghost Of Print, and for precisely these reasons."

Israeli Solo, freelance messenger commenting on The End of Print, already in progress. Raygun 28

Well, the future is back. In the mists of this so-called post-modern "era" it has often been difficult to divine it as such, but the future looms large once again, for better or worse. Granted, it only vaguely resembles The Future as it was envisioned by us when last we, as a culture, had the good faith to dare try. Popular visions of the future have for some time now been considered a thing of the past, gone the way of post-war heavy industry, the ozone layer, Big Blue and the middle class. But in sheer terms of high technology, (which are terms we were taught to *understand* when last the future shone bright with utopian, showroom promise), our future has arrived, and we are duty-bound to stand up and be counted IN. Or scanned in at least. The future may not begin in earnest (not to our liking anyhow) until The New Millennium at last arrives. Only then will we as a global village witness the grand spectacle of it, cross that symbolic bridge, and receive whatever hand stamp or souvenir visor we have coming to us, finally, as survivors of the most notorious and

over-budget century in all of recorded history. But that time is fast approaching and we are readying ourselves for it *here and now*. Shaking off our brooding post-modern entanglements, we can hardly hope to regain our status as upstanding, fresh-faced *moderns*. The time has passed for that. As *pseudo-moderns*, however, we stand at the cusp of that new millennium, eager for some qualitative upgrade to our operating system. We'll no doubt get what's coming to us.

In a world where hopes for better tomorrows have largely gone unfulfilled, where faith in the ostensibly noble cause of human civilization has been compromised by our own shame and remorse over what we've reduced ourselves and our environment to, where technological advancements have almost without exception come at an unforeseen price, we have all grown understandably reticent about the very thought of The Future. We clawed our way out of the dark ages, proved our dominion over nature a thousand times over, triumphed over necessity, invented leisure attire and finally made "The Pursuit of Wow" our topmost priority as a race. We've also come to acknowledge, at last, our insatiable appetite for extinction and, although it may go against human nature, many of us have reached for the emergency brake. We've turned back *en masse*, remixing and recycling anything and everything with religious and nostalgic fervor in hopes of reconsidering, recovering, redeeming, reducing, refurbishing, relaxing, ultimately resisting our own forward momentum. However, just as many of us choose not to regress but to forge ahead. Damn the torpedoes! We've jacked ourselves irreversibly IN, cranked it up to eleven, invented extreme sports, extreme sports drinks, extreme science, whole entire extreme industries and, naturally, an extreme *in-your-face* attitude with which we will plunge headlong into whatever our self-styled abyss may hold in store.





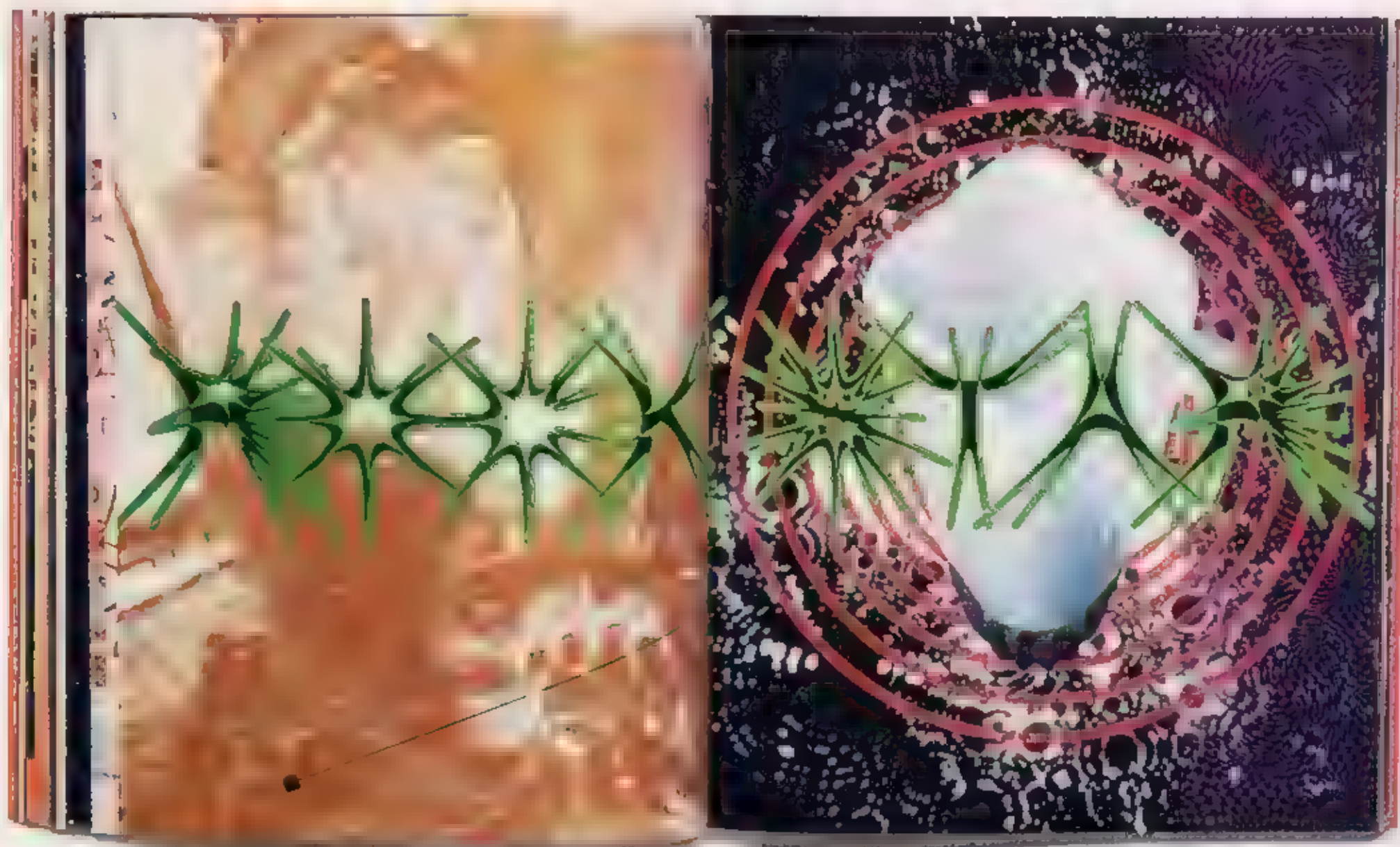
The two camps divide rather neatly (I imagine) along battle lines first laid down in the cola wars of the middle 1980s: the curmudgeony, retro Coca Cola "Classic" Camp and the youthful, forward-thinking Pepsi "Generation Next" Camp. Ironically enough though, both of these camps suckled at the glass teat of television, were weaned on predatory advertising media (one chose "the real thing," the other opted for "feelin' free"), and neither can deny their deep-seated, almost instinctive hive urge to "Get Wired." While the curmudgeon may be taking up arms, the extreme surfer is getting his gear right. Both are, however, caught in the indiscriminate undertow of technological advancement that is pulling all of humankind into battle, into addiction – and into the future. Same as it ever was. In the case of *Mind Grenades: Manifestos from the Future* the assault is at hand, or rather, in your face.

*Mind Grenades* is the first book to be released by Hardwired, the newly-formed publishing division of *Wired* magazine, and it is undeniably an eye-popping specimen, possibly a revelation. Publisher Louis Rossetto boasts in his introduction that the book makes "full use of the most modern desktop capabilities and digital prepress technologies and of Danbury Printing & Litho's 6-color Harris Heidelberg M-1000 web press. Reproducing the first three years of *Wired*'s Intro Quotes in a single volume... has led us to push the technology even further, printing this book with 25 match colors," adding with a footnote of pride, "Most magazines use 4-color presses." *Wired*, obviously, is a magazine about technology – state of the art technology, the top shelf stuff – although Rossetto emphasizes up front that the focus of the magazine is not merely on technology but on "remarkable people." The mind grenades in question are a collection of reproductions of the dazzling intro pages from *Wired* magazine that cleverly combine excerpted text from an issue's feature article

with compelling digital artwork. The first of these grenades, from *Wired*'s premier issue, states the magazine's intentions a tad more boldly, perhaps anticipating future accusations that *Wired* is actually a high-octane tech-fetish glossy. "There are a lot of magazines about technology. *Wired* is not one of them. *Wired* is about the most powerful people on the planet today – The Digital Generation." To put a finer point on it, they ask with no small amount of smarm and marketing topspin, "Why *Wired*? Because in the age of information overload, the ultimate luxury is meaning and context. Or put another way, if you're looking for the soul of our new society in wild metamorphosis, our advice is simple. Get *Wired*."

When I read this last statement, and when I consider that some people maintain a modicum of ambivalence toward *Wired* and toward technology (computers, telecommunications, the media), it strikes me that the implication here is, as always; "Don't get left behind. Don't get caught without a soul. Don't be an obsolete husk. Don't be left twisting in the wind. Undergo a simple wild metamorphosis! Get *Wired*!" I am bending their meaning somewhat, but the claims do sound more than a little challenging. Presumably the *Wired* ideal is one of interconnectivity, democratization and inclusion. Not about hot rod technology or status wars *per se*. But if it isn't about superior firepower (killer hardware), it is still, apparently, about "powerful people" (killer apps). So if you're looking for the soul of our killer new society, you may find it exactly as it always was, hungry for power and greedy for speed.

It is true that the cumulative effect of *Mind Grenades* is explosive, perhaps even "mind blowing." In terms of the bite-size messages it delivers, the book is a stimulating sampler of revolutionary and evolutionary late 20th century thought from luminaries such as Alvin





Toffler, John Perry Barlow, Kevin Kelly, Brian Eno, Michael Crichton and *Wired* patron saint Marshall McLuhan. In purely visual terms, and taken as a whole, the book works as a cheery spoonful of day-glo sugar that helps the New Society medicine go down. As a graphic engine of canny visual metaphor, concrete poetry, surrealism, extremism, pop art, banal stock photography and seemingly endless layers of embellishment, *Mind Grenades* is an intoxicating and hypnotic menagerie that's hard to put down. To use Rossetto's words, it feels "as exciting as the times we are living through."

Earlier in the introduction, Rossetto talks about when he and *Wired*'s creative director John Plunkett first sat down to discuss the magazine. "And we agreed that it should look like it had fallen out of the sky, off another planet. If you stumbled across it in the street, you'd be compelled to pick it up; and even if you didn't understand it, you would instinctively sense that it was smart and cool – that you had to invest energy to figure it out. The Intro Quotes are part of that strategy." Specifically, the mind grenades should "prepare readers for the visual and intellectual assault to come." So either as enticement, as seduction, as nerd-bait or as a prelude to some manner of "assault," these mind grenades are part of a definite "strategy" to suck the reader across the threshold, ostensibly into a future from whence these manifestos originate. Hopefully for our own good.

To Plunkett's credit, *Wired* fairly succeeds at appearing "smart and cool." At its best the magazine manages to actually look New and nothing could be more appropriate to its subject matter. To presume to envision a contemporary style that stands apart from existing trend cycles may ultimately not be necessary or even desirable, but it shows daring. And that nerve, that Will To Style should be applaud-

ed. In *Mind Grenades*, style often consists of sheer visual excess and embellishment, as is the case with issue 3.06, where designer Jeff Brice boldly and effectively renders Gary Wolf's thoughts about the complexity of memory in about as many semi-translucent layers of percolating imagery, text and op-art patterns as the eye can manage to register, with fluorescent and metallic inks tossed into the mix for good measure. Similar methods are employed in other spreads with varying degrees of success. For instance, in issue 2.08, writer Hugh Gallagher comments on the ascendancy of disk jockeys (editors of the street) in the music world. He asserts, "In a world where information plus technology equals power, those who control the editing rooms run the show," undermining the defunct notion of "the rock star, up on stage, bathed in light, inaccessible." However, the visual stew that accompanies this text seems merely to remind us that too much editing technology can quickly, with the application of a few too many filters, reduce signal (information) to noise (pure embellishment). In this respect, in simple terms of masturbatory embellishment and excess (which the desktop revolution has fostered), it could be said that there are more parallels than differences between current turn of the century design and turn of the century design a hundred years ago.

Not all of the spreads indulge in this excess. Some of the strongest examples here show wonderful restraint and function more simply as free-standing visual metaphor, unreliant on the weight of the text quotes to keep them from effervescing away. In issue 2.03, we have two of the more elegant and graphically economical spreads in the book. The focus is intellectual property issues and the difficulty in "owning an idea." One spread features a computer-generated three dimensional padlock that appears to be made out of fragile crumpled cellophane with a relevant quote from Thomas Jefferson



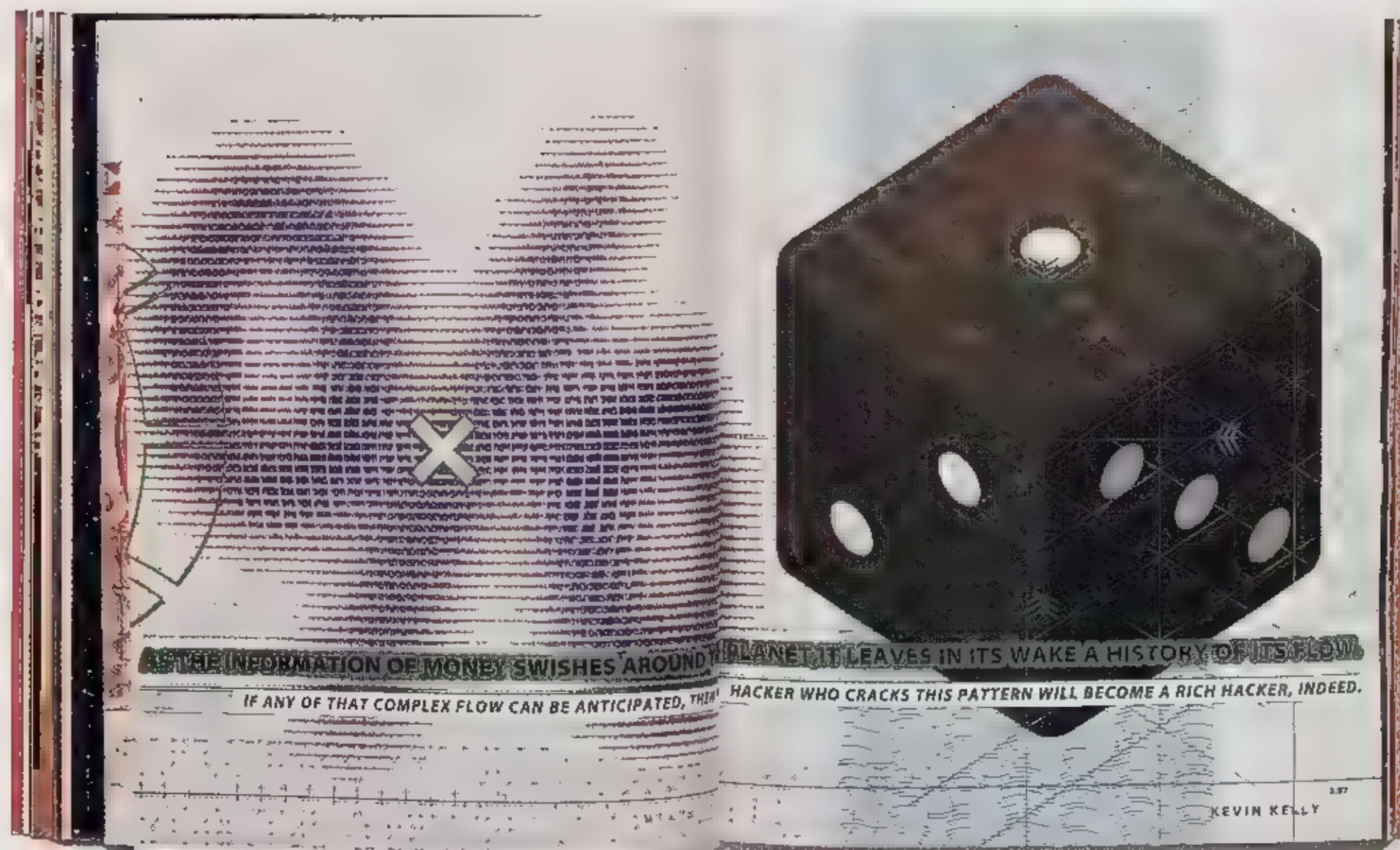


superimposed. On the following page, there is another 3D model; this time it's a pair of copper handcuffs constructed from two copyright symbols floating against a soft background of powder blue keys. As one advances through this assault of mind grenades, spreads such as these come as quite a relief and are no less "exciting."

While *Mind Grenades* stands alone as a snappy presentation of *Wired*'s show-stopping layouts, it is clearly of interest to a general audience and not just to the design crowd. (A general audience may not know a Harris Heidelberg M-1000 web press from a Langstrom 7" gangly wrench but they do know superior firepower when they hear about it!) The *Wired* readership, even The Pepsi Generation for that matter, are media-literate by now and are more keenly aware than ever of graphic design in their environment – have come to crave it thanks to the Nikes of the world. And in terms of raw visual stimulation, *Mind Grenades* is a candy store that the average channel surfer should have no trouble gobbling their way through. But also in terms of content, many of the messages here are of popular concern, are warnings meant to be heeded and carefully digested by "us." For example, in issue 2.02, Michael Schrage warns, "The fashionable, faux futurism predicts that this time will be different, that this time new media technology will guarantee the individual the upper hand over the advertiser. More likely, we'll see these new media renegotiate the power between individuals and advertisers. Yesterday, we changed the channel; today, we hit the remote; tomorrow, we'll reprogram our agents/filters. We'll interact with advertising where we once only watched; we'll seek out advertising where we once avoided it." The changes that the new wired world holds in store will no doubt affect us all. In that sense these manifestos have something to say to us all.

The time has come for books like this. Not so much as a conventional source of information but as a publishing artifact and novelty item. As an *objet d'art*, I suspect *Mind Grenades* is truly the shape of books to come. The ascendancy of the internet and electronic media late in the century has made the so-called "end of print" viable and practical, promising to reduce the bulk of human waste product constituted by newspapers, magazines and most books without reducing our never-ending flows of information. Beyond creating the cozy, globally interconnected electronic village, it seems electronic media's crowning achievement may be to ease the burden that the human population now places on the planet's natural resources, specifically our depleted forests.

This of course is the paradox lying at the heart of *Wired*, and now *Hardwired*. With a clean-running 0% waste version of *Wired* and *HotWired* humming away on the web with 24-hour easy access, spreading the gospel of a post-print world, what need have we of these extravagant hard copy duplicate editions? Is it not a little bit hypocritical, or at least decadent, for the purveyors of a paperless, decentralized, interactive, clean-running future to proselytize their message in dirty old print and toxic inks? Yes and no. For those who still do not have web access, printed matter is clearly a necessity of life – and for those who do have web access, printed matter is still a comfort and a convenience and will perhaps remain so for some time to come. But more to the point, the medium, even old-fashioned print, is still the message. Just as the new technologies will create a totally new human environment, an old technology given a new role might well deliver a new type of content, or maybe none at all. Perhaps as a novelty item, print need not concern itself with content. If we can gradually redefine the book (in its pending obsolescence) as a vanity media, as an environmentally unfriendly luxury





item, free it from its yoke of servitude as our primary source of information distribution, we may actually rescue it from antiquity and save it as *an art form*. An edition like *Mind Grenades* is as much a souvenir from the future as it is an essential collection of manifestos. It has the effect of esteeming and reaffirming the book itself as a physical, one-of-a-kind, intimate experience. Granted, *Mind Grenades* is still a flimsy paperback – a rather common, attainable luxury item despite its extravagant 25 color printing and die-cut cover. And instead of reveling in warm, static physicality, it actually tries to mimic the flickering free-flow of moving images, hyperlinks and elusive non-linear states of mind that are unique to electronic media. But the very fact that it is a *book* is decadent and this is its saving grace.

The average person probably takes the physicality and tangibility of printed matter for granted, understandably so. We are all still inundated with the stuff. But that will change when and if the average person no longer handles the same volume of printed matter he or she does now. This is what *Wired* has promised us and the shift toward this new state of affairs is occurring now at a pace commensurate with the ballooning numbers of homes, schools and businesses with personal computers and web access. In the mind grenade from issue 2.03, John Perry Barlow lays out the conditions of a new, infinitely sustainable consumer society when he says, "All the goods of the Information Age – all of the expressions once contained in books or film strips or records or newsletters – will exist either as pure thought or something very much like thought: voltage conditions darting around the Net at the speed of light, in conditions that one might behold in effect, as glowing pixels or transmitted sounds, but never touch or claim to 'own' in the old sense of the word." We can only guess how gratifying and intoxicating

these "expressions" may in fact be. But it is not difficult to imagine a body emerging from whatever ether these "voltage conditions" dart around in – aching for another body, something, *anything tangible* that a body might touch or possibly claim to "own" in the current sense of the word. Books, in all their soft, tactile, quiet, linear and intimate physicality may one day soon be precisely what we ache for. So stay tuned for that.

Meanwhile, we need to remain wired and we need to at least consider any and all manifestos from the future if ever they should cross our desks. While I tend to identify personally with the curmudgeon when it comes to the fetishization and advocacy of *new improvements* of any kind, I myself have been, for all intents and purposes, wired from the get go. I'm funny that way. I'll drink Coke or Pepsi, even mix the two together! My teeth are going to fall out in the end anyhow... *what do I care?* And while I grow weary already from the ever tightening intervals between the next big thing and the next big obsolete thing, I feel an obligation to keep up, to figure out just who are the cowboys here and who are the Indians and, finally, to figure out which of these I want to be when I grow up. Meanwhile I ride the fence, like so many of us do. Ultimately, I realize that the notion of a clearly marked threshold onto the future is as arbitrary today as it always has been, despite those looming zeros. And the "search for the soul of our new society in wild metamorphosis" has been going on for centuries and will continue surely into the next century and beyond.

Shawn Wolfe is an artist, designer and writer living in Seattle. His famed anti-branding strategy *Beatkit™* ("The General Gloss Of Falsity Is Our Only Product") promises to terminate in the year 2000. For more information check out *Zaius: Posthuman Webzine* at [www.zaius.com/zaius](http://www.zaius.com/zaius).





**G1: New Dimensions in Graphic Design**  
Rizzoli, \$35.00, 192 pages, 1996  
ISBN 0-8478-2002-5

By Lewis Blackwell and Neville Brody

# THE CUTTING EDGE TRADE

REVIEW BY RUDY VANDERLANS

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(Front Cover)



(Back Cover)



I'm forty-two now and never thought I'd ever write this, but the type in the book I'm about to review is awfully tiny. Not only that, but it seems that the ragged right text is set as a simple program default, as is the justified text, and both look like they would have benefited from a bit of human intervention. When attempting a somewhat neutral, Swiss style, stark look in your page layouts, as this book does, these typographical glitches tend to stand out. By neglecting to address such details, the efforts may be interpreted as posturing, like Macy's selling prefab torn jeans. But typographic detail is not what this book is about, and perhaps right here I've already lost more than half of the audience who would buy a book like this.

**G1: New Dimensions in Graphic Design** is not about such mundane typographic issues as proper spacing, line breaks, and hyphenation; it's about something else. To find out what its real focus is, however, is at times a frustrating experience. It's best to say that this book is about Lewis Blackwell and Neville Brody, two very talented and prolific people, and the authors of **G1**.

Blackwell, besides being the editor of the *Creative Review*, went from authoring *20th Century Type*, a comprehensive, informative, and rather traditional looking, text-heavy book about the position of type within graphic design, to co-writing *The End of Print: The Graphic Design of David Carson*, to announcing *Remix*, "a savage re-edit" of his first book *20th Century Type*. Apparently, Blackwell has come to realize "how little text you need to make a point." With *Remix*, he finds himself "chopping down text not to dumb down, but to make more intelligible the story of typography." This is a promising statement, made more intriguing by Blackwell's recent critique of Robert Bringhurst's book *The Elements of Typographic Style*, which

Blackwell describes as being part of the problem that causes people not to read much.<sup>1</sup>

Neville Brody is a graphic designer who has traveled a similarly transformative path during his life, but in the opposite direction: from innovative designer for the early *The Face* magazine and alternative music labels to art director for mainstream corporate clients such as Macromedia, Sony and Deutsche Bank. With such credits, I couldn't wait to read what the authors had to say. Blackwell and Brody have straddled both sides of design and should be perfectly capable of putting together a wonderful book with great new insights and poignant commentary on today's graphic design scene.

Like all designers, I'm a sucker for good looking graphic design books. I immediately pick them up in the store, unable to resist their appeal. There's a sexiness to graphic design work when reproduced in full color, at half its actual size. With **G1**, I find myself devouring the pages, reading the captions, looking for names, impressed by the work shown. The more pictures the better, and **G1** delivers big time in this area.

The reproductions and printing quality are luscious. As I browse, I wonder why the full color reproductions I do myself are always so frustrating, the results rarely satisfying, while the work of others often seems so brilliant. Then, I come to a piece I actually designed myself (p.20) and notice the color reproduction is quite off, making me wonder about the other work. It doesn't really matter, though. By the very nature of reproduction, the work has been taken out of its original context and has become something else, something more (or less?) than just a piece of ephemera – a topic the authors are fascinated with.



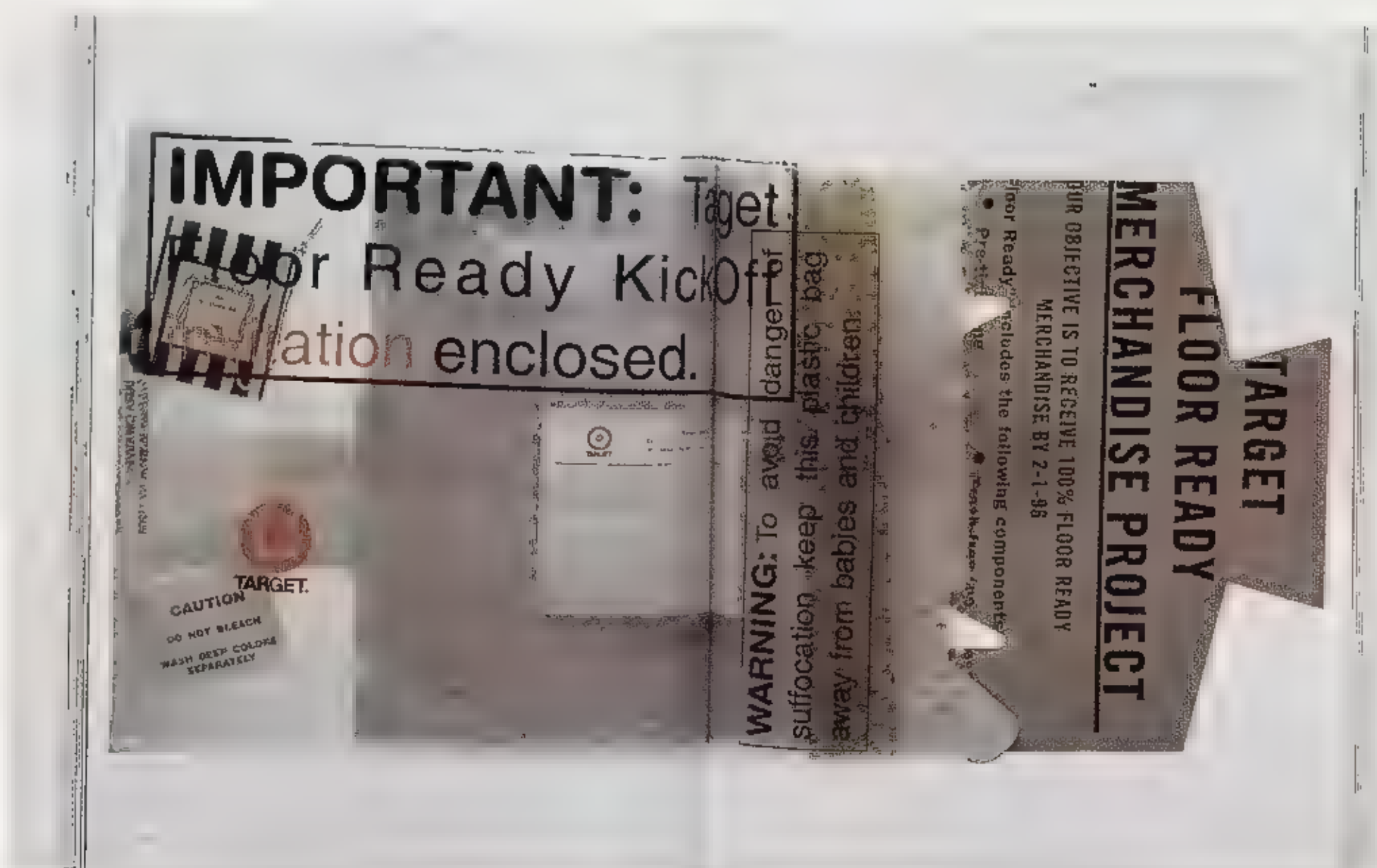


At first glance, however, this book is no different from most other design picture books published today, such as *Typography Now: The Next Wave*, *Faces on the Edge*, *The Graphic Edge*, *Typographics 1*, *Typographics 2*, *Cutting Edge Typography*, *Cool Type*, etc. As long as graphic designers hunger for exposure and name recognition, they'll continue to submit their work to these compilations at no cost to the publishers. The results are slickly produced compendiums covering recent phenomena in graphic design, usually filled with hundreds of reproductions; in short, eye candy for designers in need of a quick fix of the latest, hippest and coolest graphics around. To find out what's different about *G1*, I need to read.

The book opens with the essay "In the Beginning," which "examines the major themes that appear to excite today's cutting edge graphic designers." It also describes the selection method used to pick the work shown. Interspersed with this text are four side bars that further explore the major themes of Vernacular, Fetish, Tomorrow's Rubbish and Technology. This takes up seven pages. The remainder of the more than 190 pages of the book is filled with reproductions of work, divided into three sections designated as two-, three- and four-dimensional design, each section starting with a short essay. The reproductions of the work are accompanied by concise captions describing the intention of the piece, for whom it was created, and the dimensions. Sprinkled throughout the book are short quotes or sound bites that refer, sometimes cryptically, sometimes literally, to the pieces shown. "Follow the lines... and enter another dimension" it says underneath a series of postcards and flyers for Sony Music Entertainment, or "Advertising agencies estimate that we are exposed to 3,000 commercial messages a day in a major city" beneath four CD covers for the band Lush.

It is in the section divider essays that the book offers the most interesting angles on how we may look at the selected work and design in general. While graphic design is usually seen as two dimensional, the authors force us to rethink our preconceptions. The heavily layered designs of The Designers Republic's posters (pp. 108,109), for instance, while presented on a flat surface, suggest a sense of three dimensionality. Vaughan Oliver's book, which was produced by overprinting leftover sheets from an exhibition catalog, holds all the qualities of time passing and form in motion. These examples remind us that space and time play as significant a role in the appreciation of printed communication as it does in new media. In fact, the authors state, "The concerns of multimedia have been around for a long time - we just have some new tools to use now." (p.122).

Where the book falters, however, is in its persistently open-ended nature. The authors state that the book is "as much a series of questions as it is a body of knowledge" (p.7), but too often, just as I hope to find some insight, the ball gets kicked right back into my court. "If you want a grand theory, make it up," I'm told. Or, "The readers are invited to interact with the book to make it their own." Or, "*G1* gives the reader the choice as to whether to see graphics as authored works or as part of the continuum of communication that is art direction and design today" (front flap). Here, for instance, the authors never bother to explain the difference between the two options, except for implying that they are mutually exclusive, which is news to me. Such open-endedness becomes frustrating and makes reading the text less than engaging. If it's true that Neville Brody thinks that graphic design is "not as vital at present as 1) music 2) film 3) travel" (p.9), I'd like to know why he thinks that is. And





what is it about music, film and travel that excites him? Unfortunately, he gives no explanation. Instead more teasers follow, like "What is graphic design? Is it important?"

The authors believe that design will benefit from a rich dialogue that such questioning will generate. "Our understanding of communication design can not be left to designers and what they do" (p.8), they say. The readers are encouraged to "guess" at any structures, social or economical, that may have informed the work (p.11). However, besides the minimal information about client name, purpose and size, not much is known about the work, leaving the reader with very little to go by. It doesn't matter, though, because the authors justly note that their book will be read mostly by other graphic designers, whose opinions would be too biased anyway, and the topic is dropped. They then go on to describe the selection process, which is so complex that the authors themselves seem at times confused about their selections. This complexity is best illustrated by the ambiguous statement "Their form is representative of some condition that at least besets those of us in major cities" (p.12). What that condition is, again, is left up to the reader.

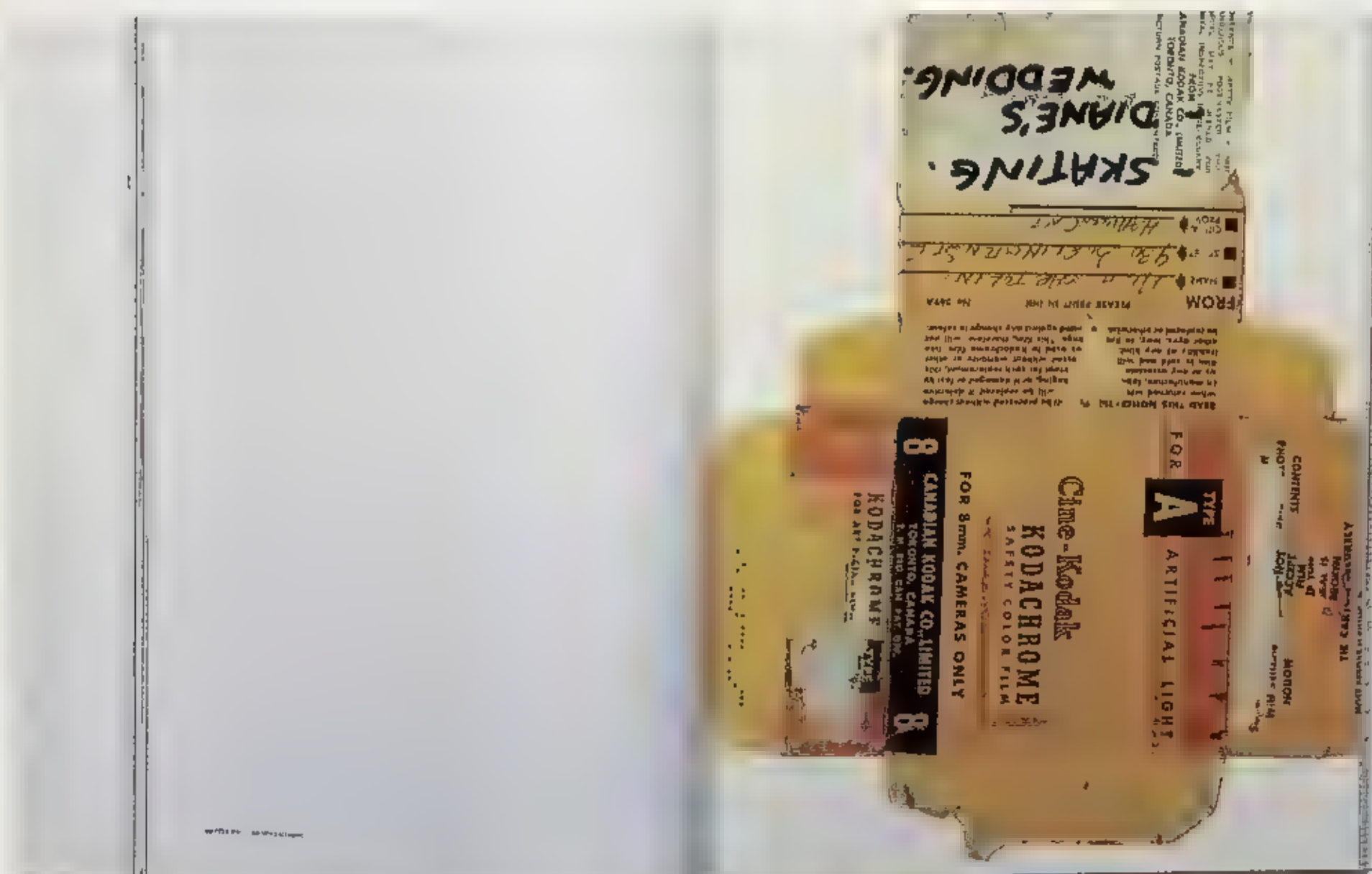
I have read and looked at the book and have from time to time referred to the back credit listing to see if I guessed the designer's name right, but am unsure if that satisfies the interaction that is expected from me. If anything, this book leaves me frustrated since I can't really engage in the kind of interaction it stimulates – the kind so perfectly described in the Fetish side bar. I'd like to touch, smell and hold that little red embossed box (p.103) in my hands, see what's in it. I'd like to tear that strip to open the Dave Clark CD (p.78), and I'd like to browse through some of the books, but I

can't. The images are frozen and flat, made uniform by the process of full color reproduction.

And how to make this book my own? I'm sure after all is said and done, *G1*, like all other picture-heavy design books, will become part of the library of books that many designers turn to when they hit creative rock bottom and badly need inspiration. When the Muse stubbornly refuses to appear, this book, like so many others of its kind, will become the last refuge for the creatively exhausted designer to use to "pick'n'mix." Not so much to create something new, but rather to quickly copy an idea, typeface, attitude, or whatever. That's how designers will make this book their own.

*G1* gives a lot of attention to the vernacular, suggesting it is one of the "major themes that appear to excite today's cutting-edge graphic designers," and that it has come to replace the gutted soul of modernism. Incorporating the vernacular into graphic design is not a recent phenomenon, though. Designers have had a long-standing relationship with "that mysterious amorphous mass of 'native' found material." During the 70s, in Europe, Hans Rudolf-Lutz, for instance, explored all kinds of vernacular ideas in his brilliant cover designs for *Typografische Monatsblätter*, while in the U.S., every issue of *U&Ic* had some kind of article dealing with the vernacular. Cranbrook, in the early 80s took it's cue from *Learning from Las Vegas* by extending Robert Venturi's theories regarding vernacular architecture to graphic design.

There is something to be said for learning from work that has withstood the test of time and the scrutiny of the public. And it's difficult to argue with the authors' statement that "[the vernacu-





lar] can claim to be design that refers to life, rather than theories that are not accepted or fully shared by practitioner and reader" (p.8). Unfortunately, much like with modernism, it is the vernacular's formal, not ideological, possibilities that today's cutting-edge graphic designers have usurped. Take, for instance, the cheap looking, cut-and-paste, xeroxed, punk-zine typography used to sell Foster's Ice Beer (p.57). Or the luscious wood block type printed on the cover of the Agfa type catalog (p.40). Or the typeface F Mogadishu (p.113), which is based on the letters on a sign written and held up by a hostage just before he was killed by the Red Army Faction. What is the point of using the vernacular in these works? Isn't it rather insensitive? Punk ideology was one of anti-establishment; it was never meant to sell mass-market products like beer. Agfa sells digital type for use on computers, one of many technologies that has caused the marginalization of handset woodblock type. F Mogadishu, while presented as an experimental font, is also a commercial typeface sold to the public, and may eventually turn up in an ad selling American luxury cars. At what point does it become inappropriate to appropriate?

While the vernacular is its central theme (emphasized by the "found" graphic object on its cover), *G1* addresses none of these more problematic issues. How, for instance, do designers reconcile their need to find respect for their work within society, while at the same time appropriating the work of others without proper credit? One reason why designers so freely appropriate the vernacular is because it is anonymous. It's easy to take the work from people you don't know. But it's not necessarily a good thing.

When the authors write that "designers celebrating the vernacular are admiring the absence of the designer-as-heroic-creator," I be-

lieve they confuse the issues. Within graphic design education and design history, there has been a tendency to move away from presenting graphic design as a simple who's who listing of great men and their work, to an approach that takes into consideration the larger context in which design is created, thereby downplaying the designer-as-heroic-creator. This does not mean that designers are ready to forfeit their identities. I know of few, if any, designers whose ambition it is to be unknown and who would enjoy seeing their work exploited without receiving credit or other compensation. In fact, the designers who have carved out a reputation by consistently appropriating the vernacular are among some of the most widely recognized and highly visible designers around today.

In the end, the one thing that sets this book apart from the current onslaught of design picture books is defined in the first paragraph of the text on the front flap: "*G1* gathers innovative work from many of the world's most influential designers, and then omits their names from the pages." Instead, the names of the designers are provided on self-adhesive labels ("appropriated from the vernacular") in the back of the book, where I'm sure they will remain in nine out of ten copies printed. No matter how good the intention, leaving out credits is not what graphic design needs, particularly if nothing beneficial is offered in its place, and when anonymity ultimately results in the work being appropriated.

Graphic design has always played a subservient role – it is a means towards an end, a carrier to make societies' manifold messages visual, always foregrounding the identity of the client while downplaying the identity of its practitioners. This focus on the product over the creator has brought about a sense with the public that graphic design grows on trees, or comes bundled with Windows 95. For this to change, graphic design does need heroes and heroines.

When it comes to fine art, the general audience knows the names of Leonardo DaVinci, Vincent van Gogh or Andy Warhol, and might even match the work with the artist. Graphic designers, on the other hand, continue to slave away in obscurity. Outside the world of graphic design, there are few if any designers known by name to the public. While almost anybody in the world has seen the *I Love NY* sticker and it's innumerable (appropriated?) derivatives, few people outside of design know that it was designed by Milton Glaser. By marrying the name of the creator to an object, the work would increase in value and respectability.

This book would have really made a statement had Blackwell and Brody, too, relegated their names to the self-adhesive stickers found in the back. While the statement would still be unclear, at least it would have convinced me that the authors believe in it. But they are well aware that it is their names that help sell this book. Omitting credits is what sets this book apart, but it serves no clear purpose. While much of the work in this book deserves to be praised and honored by publishing it in book form, *G1* does little to explain why. It leaves me to believe that *G1* is simply another way to cash in on what remains a lucrative publishing venture: the exploitation of "cutting-edge" graphic design.





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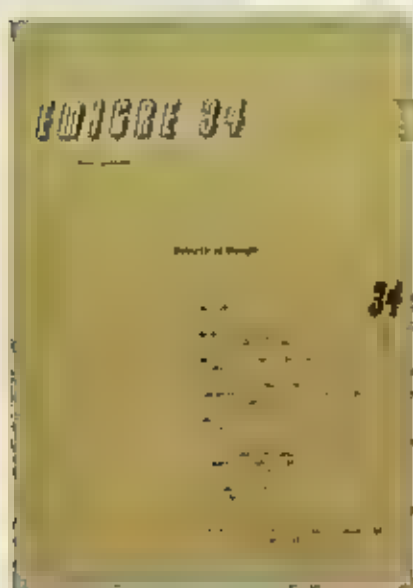
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# 34

1995

### The Rebirth of Design

Andrew Blauvelt, Putch Tu and Victor Margo in each take an in depth look at Don Friedman's book *Radical Modernism*. Anne Burdick and Louise Sandhaus review Robin Kinross's books *Modern Typography* and *Fellow Readers*. Jeffery Keedy explores the relationship between graphic design and Modernist ideologies. Rudy Vanderlans ponders the commodification of graphic design experiments. Matt Owens gives us a design student's look at the contemporary state of graphic design.



# 35

1995

### Mouthpiece

**Edited and art directed by Anne Burdick**

This issue presents an eclectic mix of voices discussing what happens when the worlds of writing and design coincide. Featuring Johanna Drucker on the future of writing. Adriano Pedrosa and Michael Worthington discuss the birth of the designer as auteur. Andrew Blauvelt and Joani Spadaro challenge the primacy of the verbal. Kevin Mount provides excerpts from imaginary books, and Denise Gonzales Crisp discusses the book *Looking Closer*.



# 36

1995

### Mouthpiece 2

**Edited and art directed by Anne Burdick**

Louise Sandhaus conducts a verbal/visual exploration of the digital essay. Bron Schorn introduces OULIPO (the workshop of potential literature). Anne Bush writes about the history of the critic. Stuart McKee explores the relationship between writing and community formation. Felix Janssens extols the need to reconsider the form of the book. Gérard Mermoz investigates the functions of text as they are given typographic form. And much more.



# 37

1996

### Joint Venture

This issue is about collaboration, writing, intellectual property, entrepreneurialism, poetry, authorship, self-publishing, reading and everything else that design is made of, but this time we look at it from the perspective of a group of artists that includes two writers, one graphic designer and one visual artist. Anne Burdick interviews Stephen Farrell and Steve Tomasula. Rudy Vanderlans talks with Daniel X. O'Neil and Marc Nagtzaam.

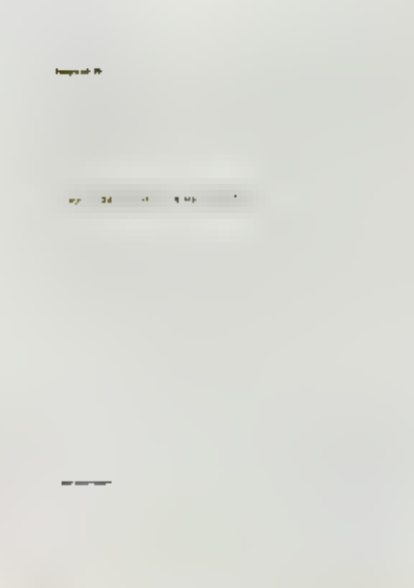


# 38

1996

### The Authentic Issue

Included are typographic experiments by Susan LaPorte, Steve Tomasula, Daniel X. O'Neil, Matt Dinerstein, Stephen Farrell, and Margo Johnson. John Downer and Rudy Vanderlans discuss aspects of digital type design. House Industries gives a behind the scenes look at their foundry of types. Andrew Blauvelt ponders how the "death of the Author" has given rise to the dubious status of the "Designer as Auteur."



# 39

1996

### Graphic Design and the Next Big Thing

Lorraine Wild gives an overview of graphic design education and the way it is currently being challenged by new media. Kenneth Fitzgerald reviews Elliott Earls's CD *Throwing Apples at the Sun*. Putch Tu discusses geeks, freaks, cyborgs, blenders, power tools, remote controls, and other nervous machines, and how it all relates to graphic design. Carl Francis DiSalvo reviews Rvital Ronell's *The Telephone Book*. Paul Roberts lends us his insights as writers bemoan loss of authorial control. Diane Gromala reviews Sven Birkerts's book *The Gutenberg Elegies*.



# 40

1996

### The Info Event

**Edited by Andrew Blauvelt**

Andrew Blauvelt looks at the hybrid and mutable nature of the information event and asks "Where is the pleasure in information design?" Teal Triggs meets John Warwicker of the London-based collective Tomato. Diane Gromala examines the relationships among the body, design, and the impact of technology. Anne Burdick reviews Jay David Bolter's book *Writing Space*. Frances Butler takes on a historical look at the structures and spaces devised for holding and shaping meaning.



# 41

1997

### The Magazine Issue

When it comes to magazines, which ones do we remember best, and what is it that makes them so memorable? This is the question we posed to Martin Venezky, Nancy Bonnell-Kangas, Daniel X. O'Neil, Denise Gonzales Crisp, and Kenneth Fitzgerald. Also contains a 32-page facsimile of the (possibly fictional) magazine project entitled *The News of the Whirled*, by Kenneth Fitzgerald.



# 42

1997

### The Mercantile Issue

Articles include *Design(er) Type or Graphic Designers Who Design Typefaces (and the Typographers Who Forgive Them)* by Mr. Keedy. *Decay and Renewal in Typeface Markets. Variations on a Typographical Theme*, by Alan Marshall. *On Classifying Type* by Jonathan Hoefler, plus *Walking in the City*, a review by Andrew Blauvelt of the graphic design exhibition *Mixing Messages: Graphic Design and Contemporary Culture*. A limited number of copies is available at \$50 per copy.



# 43

1997

### Designers are People Too

Jeffery Keedy lets it rip in *Greasing the Wheels of Capitalism with Style and Taste* or the "Professionalization" of Graphic Design in America, while Denise Gonzales-Crisp looks at what designers (can) do to circumvent the traditional and often compromising client/designer relationship. Teal Triggs and Sian Cook, of the London-based Women's Design + Research Unit, revisit the seemingly unchanged role of women as both subjects and objects in graphic design. And Rudy Vanderlans takes a closer look at type as intellectual property. Includes pull-out poster introducing Zuzana Licko's new typeface family Base Monospace.





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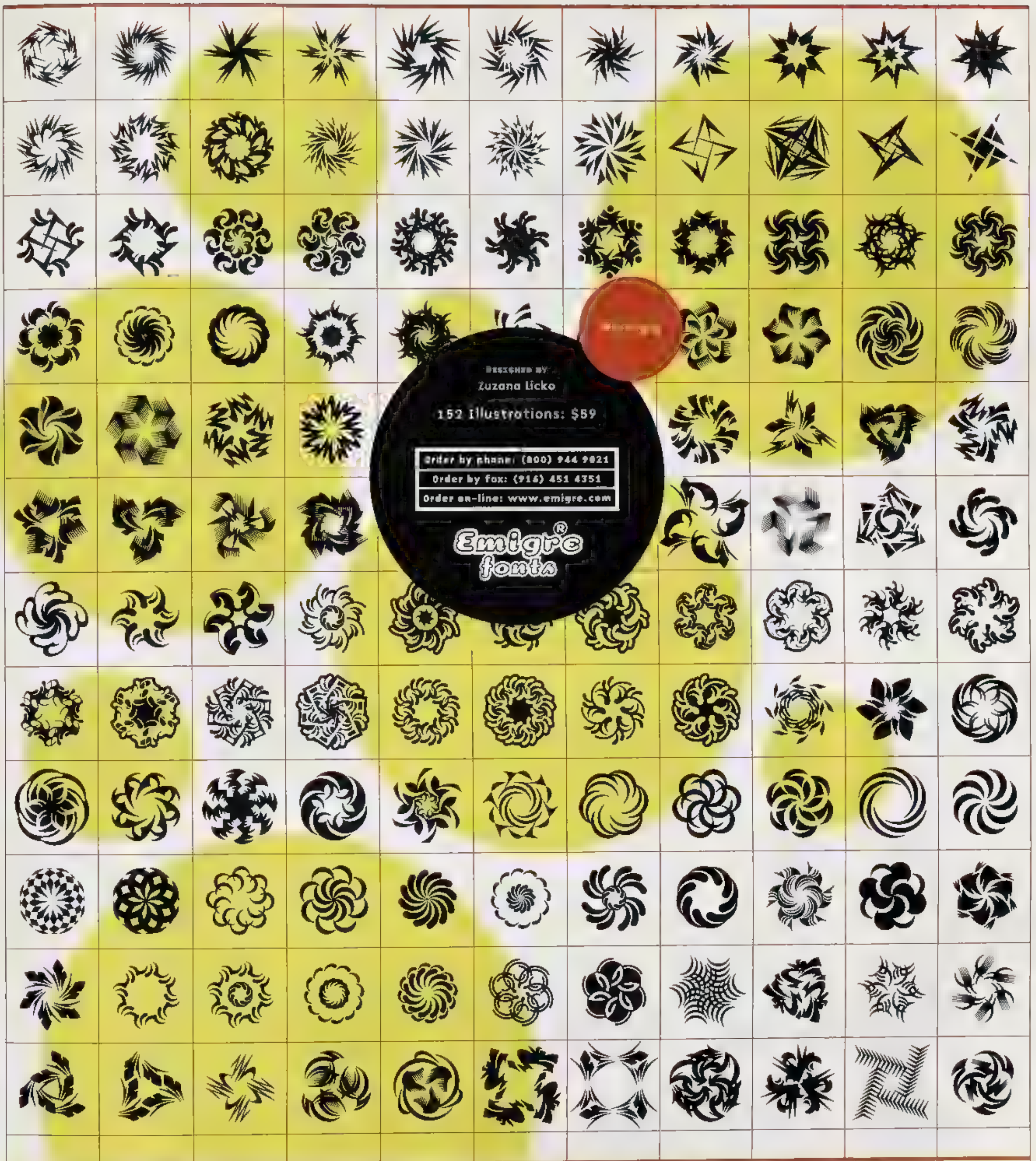
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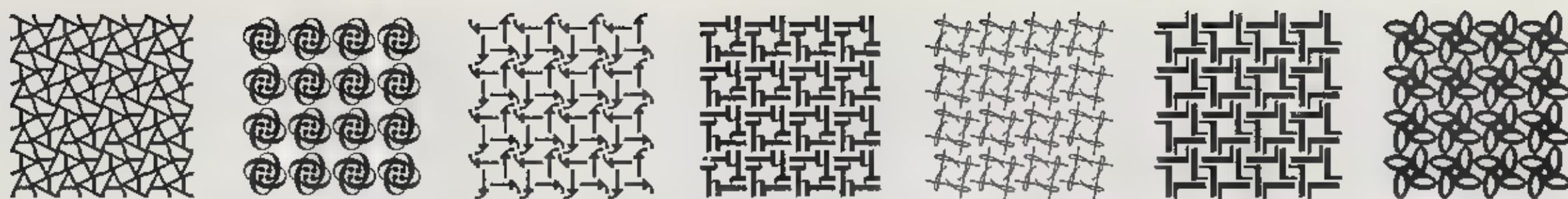
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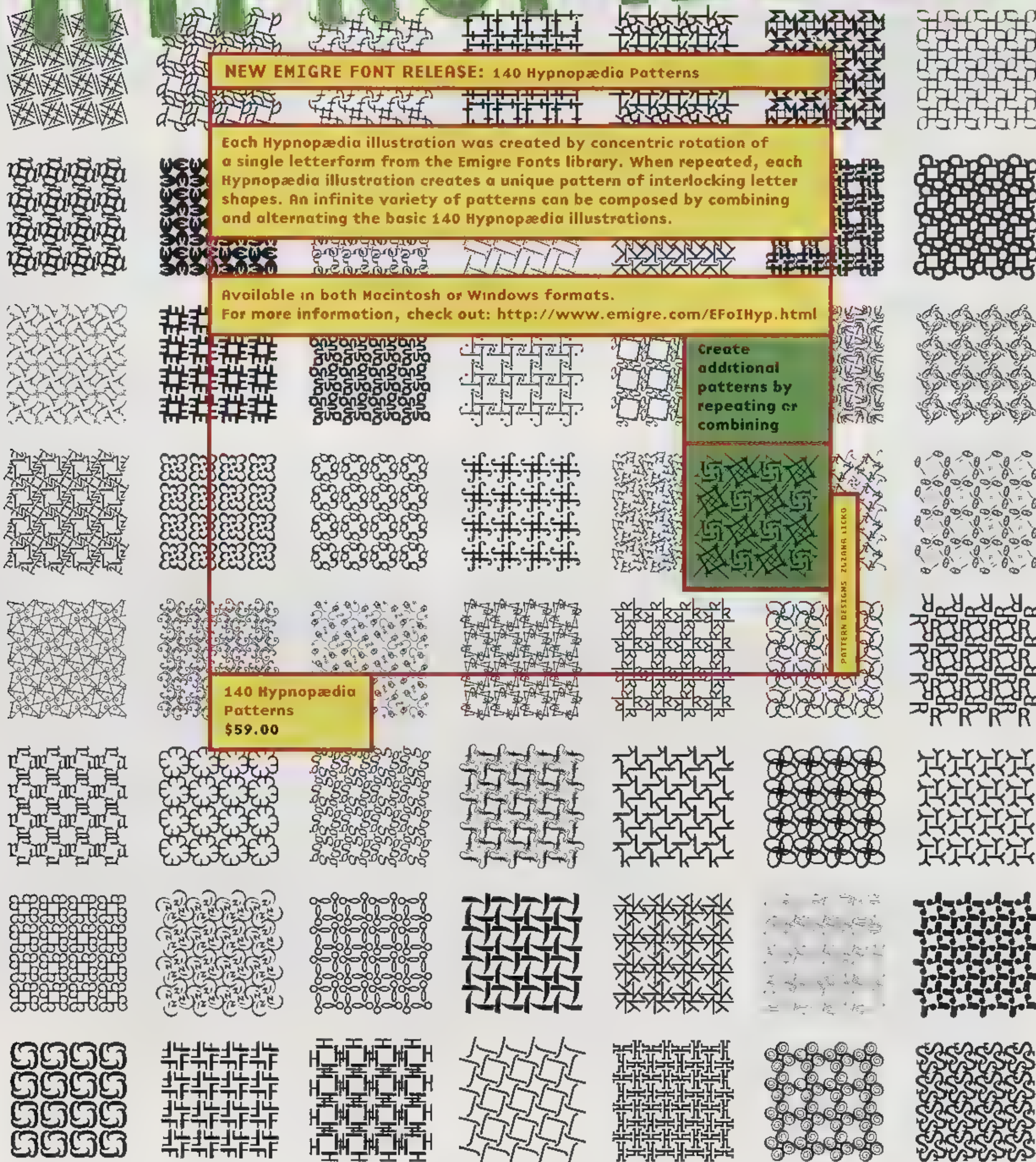
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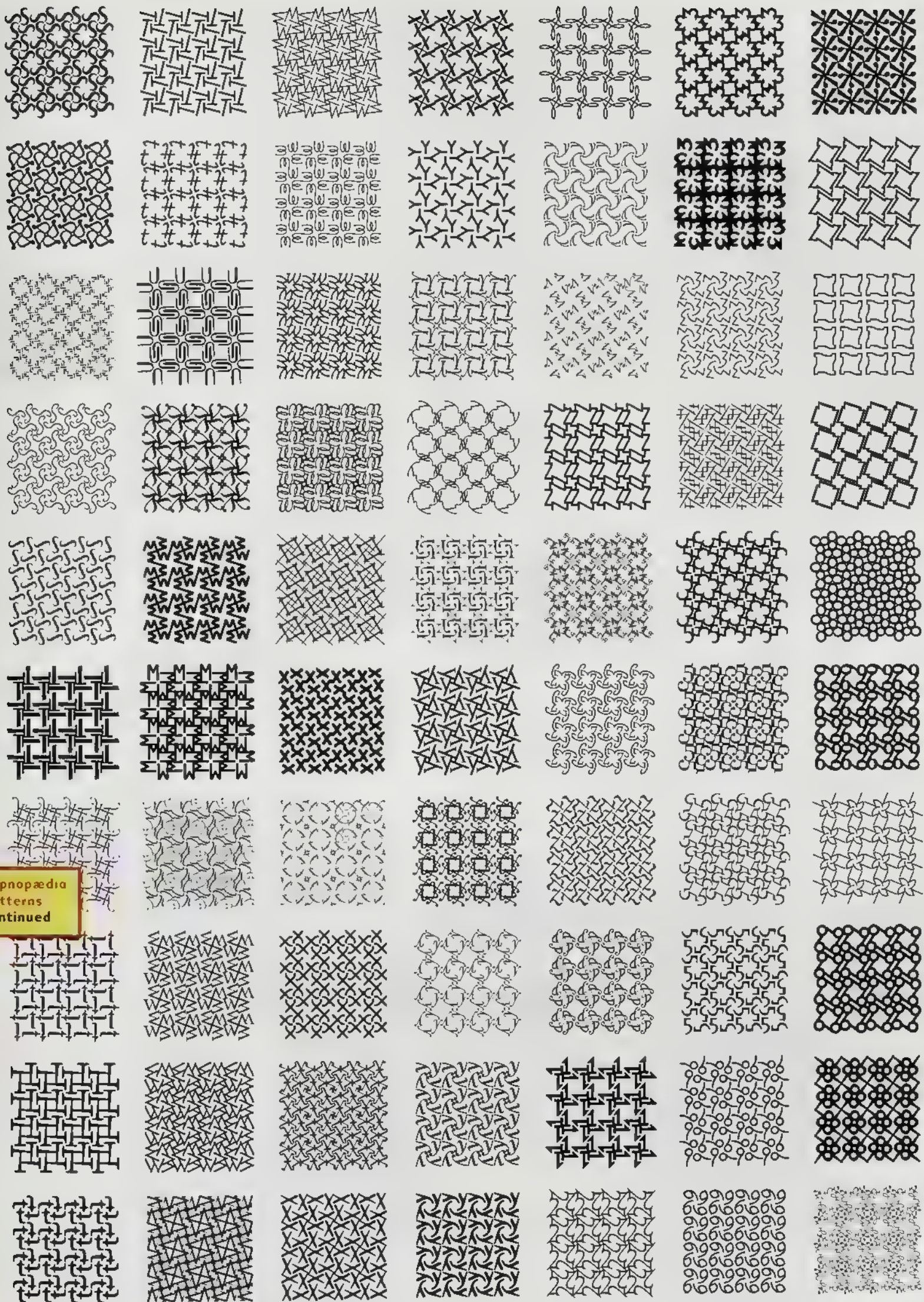
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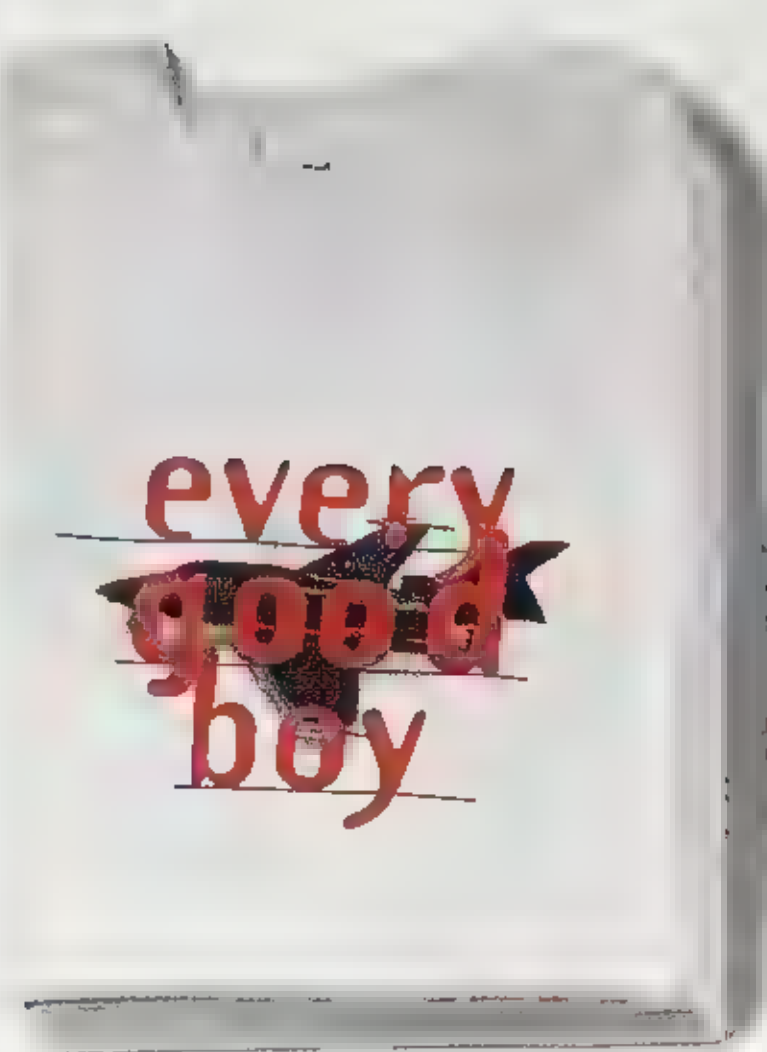
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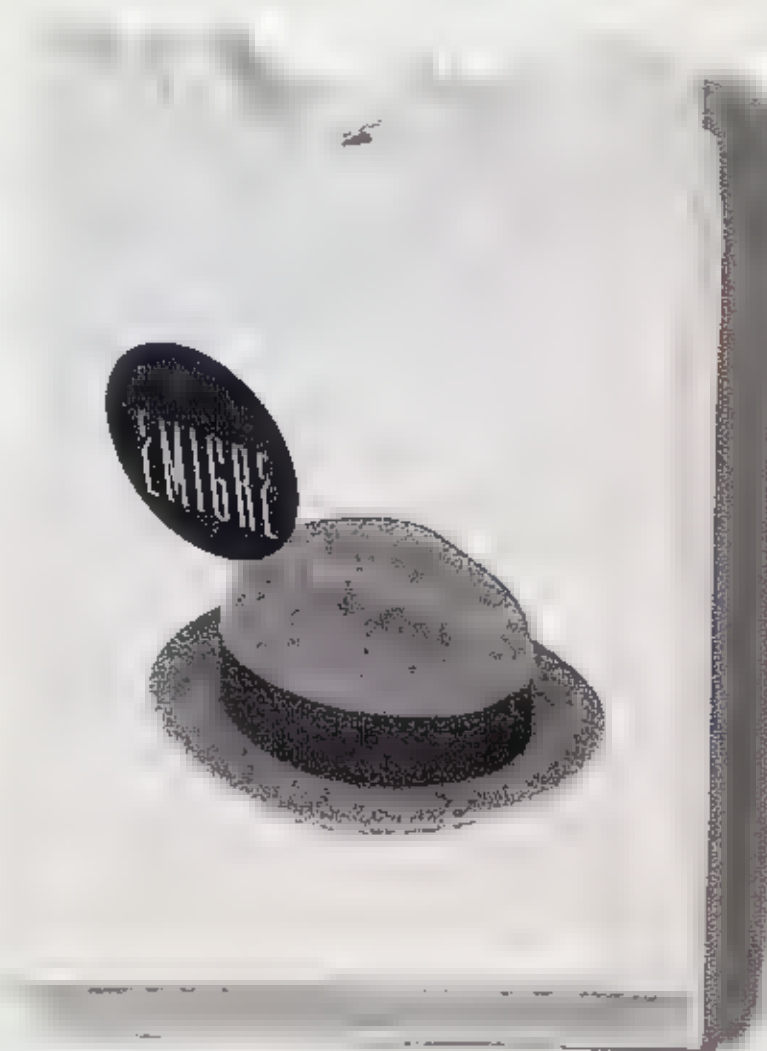
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\$ 65 Oblong Regular & Oblong Bold

\$ 95 Ottomat Book, Ottomat *Italic* & Ottomat Bold

\$ 65  Dark, half full & Half Empty

\$ 95 platelet thin, regular, & heavy

\$ 65 Quartet Regular & Bold

\$ 65 QUARTET SMALL CAPS REG & SMALL CAPS BOLD

\$ 95 Remedy Single, Double & **EXTRAS** 

\$ 65 Sabbath Black & Sabbath Black Heavy

\$ 95 Senator Thin, Senator Demi & Senator Ultra

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\$ 59  Thingbat 111 illustrations

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\$ 65 Emigre Eight, Emigre Ten, Emigre Fourteen & Emigre Fifteen

\$ 65 **OAKLAND SIX**, Emperor Eight, Emigre Fifteen & Universal Nineteen

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**Standard Character Set:** Most Emigre Fonts contain the following:

Standard Character Set: Most Emigre Fonts contain the following:  
aAbBcCdDeEfFgGhHiIjJkKlLmMnNoOpPqQrRsStTuUvVwWxXyYzZ!~"#\$%&'()\*+,-./:;="?@|[]{}^\_`~¡¢£¥¦§¨ª«¬®¯°±²³´µ¶·¸¹º»¼½¾¿ÀÁÂÃÄÅÆÇÈÉÊËÌÍÎÏÐÑÒÓÔÕÖ×ØÙÚÛÜÝÞßàáâãäåæçèéêëìíîïðñòóôõö÷ùúûüýþÿ

**Small Caps Character Set:** Small Caps and Fractions fonts contain the following

**Small Caps Character Set:** Small Caps and Fractions fonts contain the following  
A A B B C C D D E E F F G G H H I I J J K K L L M M N N O O P P Q Q R R S S T T U U V V W W X X Y Y Z Z ! " # \$ % & ' ( ) , - . / : ; \_ { | } ~ ª « ¬ ® ¯ ° ± ² ³ ´ µ ¶ · ¸ ¹ º » ¼ ½ ¾ ¿ À Á Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ à á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ

**Packages that come with Fractions include the following:**

Superior letters: used in French and Spanish text for certain abbreviations a b d e i l m n o r s t

Fractions: the 1/4 1/2 3/4 1/8 3/8 5/8 7/8 1/3 and 2/3 fractions are provided, to construct others, connect the superior and inferior numerals with the fraction slash

Superior and Inferior Numerals: use for footnotes or to construct custom fractions 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 / 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

**F-ligatures:** in addition to **fi** and **fl**, the **ff** **ffi** and **ffl** ligatures are also provided

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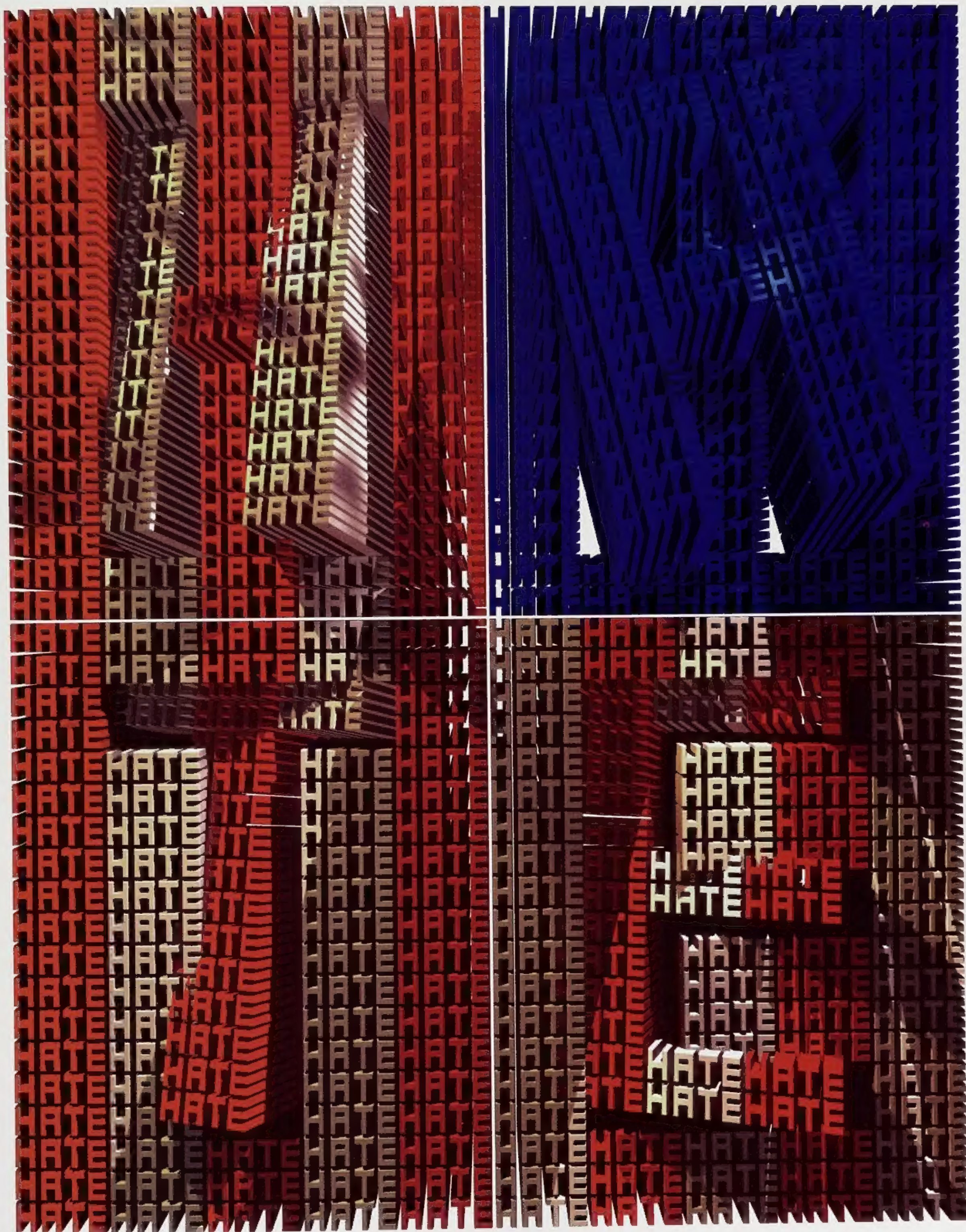
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